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The Last Revolutionary

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From Nuova Enciclopedia

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Shelter the Pilgrim—a story

ANDREW WATERMAN:
Out for the Elements

VICTOR BROMBERT:
Hugo's Shakespeare

Poems by YANNIS RITSOS, SYDNEY LEA, C. B. COX, ROBERT SCHULTZ, JANE MAYHALL, DOROTHY ROBERTS, ROBERT McDOWELL.

and Reviews by JAMES FINN COTTER, ASAHINA, CHARLES W. MILLARD, J. D. McCLATCHY, KEARNS, THOMAS R. SMITH.

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To Our Readers

Publication of this issue has been made possible in part by a grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines.

We wish to remind readers who submit manuscripts to the *Review* that our summer moratorium on unsolicited manuscripts runs from June 1 to September 30.

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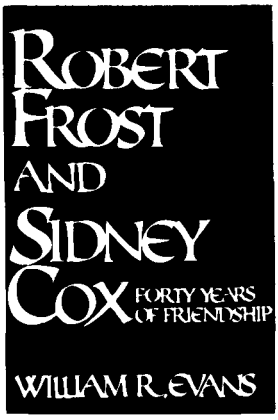

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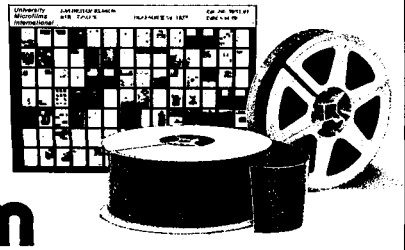

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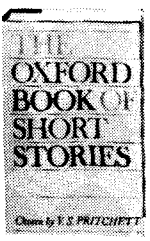

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YANNIS RITSOS

Level Duration

Foundations under foundations. The churches under the houses.
Belfries above the houses. At what depth of rock
does the root of the fig tree grasp? On what branch of the wind
does the gold-winged Archangel grasp? We will ascend above
supported on the shoulders of the dead, with the earth on our chests,
in a procession of ruins, and the prickly pears arranged
along the length of time, mute, unresponsive,
with their broad hands blunting the clang of the buried church-bell.

Perpetual

This which you called aimless, this which pales in time,
this hammer with the nails which would turn into a shovel—
the stone endured, the water widened, the circle shrank.
I sat then on the rock, smoked my cigarette. "The world"—he said—
"is not you and me." In the distance I could make out the two quiet ships,
the one leaving, and the one coming with the nine unsuspecting girls—
one girl wears blue, another red, another only a bracelet;
three others hold hands; the seventh is bringing a basin;
I dip my hand in the lukewarm water, take out the coin—it gleams. I myself
had cast it into the basin years ago. I wipe my two fingers
on the white fluffy towel—the ninth girl holds it. The eighth is absent—
it's with this one I lie at night on a bed of stones, squeezing with hatred
the nickel key of the moon on her left breast.

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Like Travelers

Desolate afternoon. The ship with the blazing lights
passed behind the wild lilac bush. No one
is waiting for anyone. They brought the old binoculars
of the dead sea captain and pretended to look.
It's the old woman with her bundle—one of them said.
I see the two barrels side by side—the other said.
A small girl is wearing a yellow jacket.
This ashy stain is behind the ship.

And you spearing nothingness to make it confess.

The Roots

Here we took root. From this balcony you first looked at the sea
between two morning suns—one rose-colored, the other black—
you had a small mirror in your pocket, a comb, a handkerchief;
on your back the rock's steepness spread out a warmed meter of
height;
the latches of the Lazaretto smelled of thyme and rust.
When you went into the house again, the rooms were steeped in
darkness, nailed down,
riddled with green spots; the drinking glasses had changed
place;
the piano still preserved the preceding evening of the dead and a
rose;
the youngest maid was already conspiring with the stones; words
were regulated before and much beyond their meaning.

Afterward we learned how roots, too, journey under the rock or
with the rock;
we encountered the same window in Knossos, in Mistra, in
Mycenae, in Thebes;

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the broad leaf of the fig tree on the same body and on the second statue
when the beautiful straight-browed girls ascended the marble stairs carrying
the long unfolded peplos embroidered with horses, gods and baskets—
one of the girl's sandals slid off her foot, but she did not lean down to pick it up; she did not let go of the peplos
but went on to the altar, limping slightly. It is that walk of hers
which has passed unaltered throughout the entire year,
along with your gaze as ecstatic and as sad as the roots.

Announcement

These rocks he carries on his shoulders he carves into his stools and his wings.
Here were Stavroula, Nina, Aliki, Thekla, Ourania—
they sang toward the sea from their balconies under an enormous moon,
they took the blue dye for love, plaited songs in their hair.
The rowers took up to the citadel their broken oars. One Sunday morning
before the scorching heat of July set in, a handsome equestrian appeared in the doorway
and rode his white horse down into the church. "Stop"—he said—
"I've brought the keys." He dismounted and advanced, pulling his horse by the reins,
and placed the black chest with its golden nails in front of the Holy Altar Door. The Elkomenos Christ
raised his lowered eyelids. But even now the horseman did not cross himself; he jumped
once more on his saddle, mounted up the stone stairs, hoofs pounding, and went out. He left behind him
smoke, incense, clouds of dust, speechless archangels, priests, chanters, and the entire congregation.

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Remembrances

Your boyhood years waited for you in forgotten corners,
in demolished buildings, in Byzantine arcades—
the barber shop was there; there the shoemaker's, over there
must have been the fish store—the low stone wall bears a
resemblance. The woman
with the very long hair—the mailman had abducted her;
afterward she died. It was raining. The four children
had locked themselves in the other room. They held
the old sea-blue chest. We didn't have more time—
events one on top of the other, wars and wars, expatriations,
books,
half-finished recollections, loves, the closed well;
the parish priest omitted names—who remembers them? Later
the same child, during leap years, lugging water in a basket,
and the ordeal of the great desolation on the shattered watch
towers.

Traces

Here the wild fig trees, the wild stones.
The profound bird flew by, cried out, and left;
the certainty of eternity remained unswerving—
that which prepared the radiantly beautiful and blessed
without resentment amid their mortality,
without arrogance amid their lifeless immortality.

The stone Saints smiling in the earth,
the protecters of Monovasia outside history.

[*Translated from the Greek by Kimon Friar and Kostas Myrsiades*]

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ALBERTO SAVINIO

From *Nuova Enciclopedia*

Alberto Savinio (pen name of Andrea de Chirico, younger brother of the painter Giorgio de Chirico) was born in Athens in 1891 and died in Rome in 1952. His earliest interest was in music. He studied harmony and counterpoint ("the art of joining and the art of separating") with Max Reger. After his father's death in 1910, the family moved to Paris, where the two brothers became part of the Apollinaire-Picasso circle. Savinio was then the main theorist and his brother the main practitioner of what they called "metaphysical painting," which inspired certain notions in the young André Breton (see his Anthologie de l'humeur noir*). After serving in Macedonia during World War I, Savinio abandoned music and returned to Paris where he took up painting and published his first novel,* Ermafrodito *(1918). Today he is regarded as a memoirist and essayist of European stature (*Souvenirs, Infanzia di Nivasio Dolcemare, Tutta la vita*). The short essays of his* Nuova Enciclopedia, *from which the following pieces have been selected, were written during the forties but published in book form only in 1977.*

DELIBERATIONS

"It is a custom among the Persians to discuss their most important affairs in a state of drunkenness, and to repeat the next day when they are sober what they found worthwhile in the discussion. If it still seems worthwhile when they are sober, they accept it; if not, they reject it. On the other hand, if they have already discussed something while sober, they will discuss it again when they are drunk." So Herodotus wrote in the first chapter of his *Histories.* And Tacitus attributed the same custom to the ancient Germanii. When Herodotus read his *Histories* at the Olympic games, the enthusiasm was so great that the nine books were, by acclamation, named after the nine Muses. It's hard to imagine a historian of our time, Johan Huizinga say, reading his *Waning of the Middle Ages* at the Olympics in Anvers or Berlin or Los Angeles and meeting with such success. Why is what was possible "then" not possible now? Herodotus' first book is dedicated to Clio, which is only proper.

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Clio in Greek is *kleio,* which means "locked." The name of the most severe of the nine Muses reveals the true function of history, which is to "lock up" our actions in the past, so as to take their weight off our backs and enable us to find a new courage each morning, if we can't find a new world.

DOGS (Love of)

The way dogs are treated in Constantinople suggests that the Turks have small love for the animal known as "man's best friend." Which is understandable. Starting from nothing in the south, the love of dogs grows stronger the further north we go. The "climatic" variations in this sentiment have been considerably influenced by variations in religious belief.

Schopenhauer, a northerner, loved dogs. There was a bear-skin rug on the floor near the window in his study which indicated where the one whom the master of the house called "his best friend" used to lie. The friend in question was a handsome white spaniel whom Schopenhauer, in his love for Indian philosophy, called Atman, which means "soul of the world." But one day in 1849, Atman died. That same day, Schopenhauer went to a kennel in Frankfort and bought another handsome white spaniel, named it Atman which means "soul of the world," taught it to lie on the bear-skin rug near the window in his study, and went back to writing *The World as Will and Representation.* At bottom, Schopenhauer's love of dogs was a simple need for animal warmth. And for how many men is marriage, which others have defined as "a long conversation," no more than the simple need for animal warmth? Nietzsche expressed the same need more poetically: "Give me warm hands and burning hearts. . . . "

FREEDOM

Man fights for freedom. He fights against everything that keeps him from being free. He has fought against feudalism. He has fought against the privileges of the nobility and clergy (French Revolution). He is fighting against capitalism. And after that . . . ? It would be helpful to know what obstacles man will have to fight

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against after capitalism in order to achieve full and perfect freedom. It's not hard to guess what sort of freedom will come after capitalism. An even murkier freedom. What must be done to clarify freedom? Freedom will be totally clear only when the world is rid of the last vestiges of the idea of God. Only when the last residue of the divine has disappeared, that is, of whatever stands above man, offers him mystery, fills him with longing, encourages his hopes, gives him a goal. On the other hand, there will be no perfect freedom as long as man keeps even the slightest memory of the concept of cause and effect, of the notion that life in general and each thing in particular has a purpose. As long as man has not totally forgotten the questions he asks about such things as birth, death, and art: "Why?" and "What does it mean?" As long as there is even the smallest suspicion that things *have a hidden meaning.* As long as life has not reached the condition of perfect meaninglessness and supreme insouciance. As long as the human mind has not arrived at pure lyricism. When that day comes, the *Iliad*, the *Commedia*, the Sistine frescoes, the lessons of the moralists, the systems of the philosophers, the works of the statesmen, and everything grave, "serious," "meaningful," venerable, necessary in the world will be looked upon with archeological curiosity, as remnants of an age of barbarism and slavery.

HITLER

In September 1943 I was in Versilia. German armored columns hidden under fake bushes and bristling with toad-like troops were systematically invading our most "Italian" cities and spreading like huge iron worms over our most human countryside. At noon on the eleventh of September I was crossing the Piazza di Vittoria Apuana in Forte dei Marmi. Feeling thirsty, I stopped at a little stand where a woman was selling cold drinks and slices of watermelon. A young man rode up on a bicycle and said to the woman: "Have you heard? They say Hitler is dead." The woman went on stirring her raspberry syrup and crushed ice and showed neither surprise nor any other emotion. The young cyclist looked a bit disappointed and repeated his (incidentally false) news two or three times. Finally, faced with the woman's persistent indifference, we glanced at each other like accomplices sharing our extraordinary

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discovery that she *did not know who Hitler was.* In 1936, during a wild-cat hunt on the edge of the Pinsk marshes, organized by the president of the Republic of Poland in honor of Hermann Goering, it was discovered that the inhabitants of that desolate region were totally unaware that a war had been fought nearby, the one we call, antonomastically, the Great War. Years ago in a *basso* in Naples an old woman was pointed out to me who had never received a single letter or post card in her life. But the "drink lady" of the Vittoria Apuana was neither old nor a native of the Pinsk marshes. In fact, she was young, bright looking, and lived in one of the most civilized and enlightened parts of Italy. Conclusion . . . ? It occurred to me that she had remained unaware of Hitler's existence *for hygienic reasons*, and the practicality of the idea helped me to overcome its obvious absurdity. I recalled that I myself had proposed, many years before, the creation of a league whose members would pledge to remain unaware of Mussolini and never speak his name. If more people had the will, the resoluteness, and above all the "hygienic concern" necessary to keep such a pledge, the rise of men like Mussolini and Hitler would be like a balloon trying to rise in an airless space. Why is it impossible for such a pact to be generally accepted? Because men like Hitler and Mussolini represent, express, and act out the ideas, desires, and ambitions of the majority of men, which are ideas of military glory, desires for domination, ambitions for conquest. Why should we be surprised at or complain about the results of the power of a Mussolini or a Hitler when men, *all men*, are brought up with the same notions of "greatness" of which Hitler and Mussolini are the natural and precise expression? Though here, too, there happen to be a few exceptions. From my earliest childhood until now when I am more than half a century old, I have always felt a total indifference to and nursed a profound disdain for the qualities that constitute the "greatness" and "glory" of men like Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini. The mistake is to distinguish between the ones who succeeded and the ones who failed. It's not a question of turning against Mussolini and Hitler once Mussolini and Hitler have run out of luck and can no longer "do what was expected of them." It's a question of reversing the judgment that *supports* these types. It's a question of abolishing the ideas that make men like Hitler and Mussolini not only possible but *highly desirable.* It's a question, in short, of a radical change in the concept of greatness. Of which no

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sign can be seen even in the midst of the disaster such "greatness" has brought upon us. There is rather a danger that in the process of repairing the damage that the Hitlers and Mussolinis have done new Hitlers and Mussolinis will be created. But who is aware of it?

INTELLIGENCE

A complete, balanced, fruitful intelligence is such a rare thing; the effort it costs a man to climb the steps of intelligence is so painful, so hopeless; the damage done by incomplete intelligence is so much worse than what could possibly come from honest, placid stupidity, that I begin seriously to doubt that intelligence has any real value at all, much praised and much desired though it be. Isn't the very intensity, the ambition a man brings to his search for intelligence convincing proof that intelligence is an unnatural, inhuman condition? More than anything else, man always wants what he does not have, what he cannot and should not have. And among the things man wants—love, health, wealth, honors—isn't intelligence the main, the Grand Desire? Stupidity, on the other hand, that poor, modest, despised, vilified Cinderella, is what man's true, spontaneous, enduring love always returns to. If we take as analogy the amorous dualism of those insatiable fools who pay for the luxury of a mistress when they already have a wife, we may say that in the metaphysical realm as well man divides his affections between Intelligence (the mistress) and Stupidity (the wife), i.e. that he "consorts" with them (etymology has never been more apt). And for all the deceptions of intelligence, its whims, lies, betrayals, costs (she is an expensive mistress), it is kind and generous stupidity that consoles him. She is the patient, faithful one who, after all the peccadilloes and discouragements of a prolonged youth, waits by the fire to share with us in idyllic sweetness the peace of old age.

LIFE

First Stage (1904). The newspapers are full of the Russo-Japanese War. Reports by Luigi Barzini on the Battle of Mukden. The *Italian Illustrated* devotes a full color page to the sinking of the

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cruiser Variag, which fought alone against an entire squadron. Nivasio Dolcemare, his hands sticking out from under the sheet, holds the big page of glossy paper by the edges. Here we see how errors come about: the great errors of History. "His hands sticking out from under the sheet" suggests that Nivasio Dolcemare is in bed. Wrong. Nivasio Dolcemare is not in bed, he is in the barbershop, and the sheet we're talking about is not the sheet a man covers himself with each night in preparation for the shroud which one day will cover him forever, it is the sheet by means of which the barber isolates the client's head like a rock in the midst of a foaming sea so that it can be properly and conveniently worked on. The dying cruiser shown in the center of the page in the attitude of a deer encircled by hounds, has four extremely tall smokestacks through which its soul is escaping in the form of a thin vapor, and Nivasio thinks to himself that the ship must be listing that way not because it has been hit by enemy fire but because its four oversized smokestacks have thrown it off balance. And why not? After all, just as we turn over on our pillows in order to go to sleep, so ships that wanted to sleep would have to roll over on their sides in the water, which is their pillow, and at night the smooth, still sea would be full of ships floating along in the moonlight with their keels and antennas horizontal. Innovations in naval architecture begin to hatch in Nivasio's mind. He imagines ships without smokestacks (the beginning of our century was the age of Withouts: carriages without horses, telegraphs without wires, while in another sense of "without" the age of songs without words was dying) or with lateral exhaust pipes folded back like a seal's flippers, in which imaginings we can also see the basis of aerodynamic form. There's nothing surprising about that: these are "barbershop" musings. The most absurd, extraordinary, and yet incisive ideas come to us while we are in the barber's hands. A result of our confined position and of the *principium tormentorum.* In the end, those of us who write down our ideas would be far more brilliant if we learned to work in torturous positions, standing on one foot like shore birds or hanging by our knees from a swing; and our thoughts in bed at night would be more beautiful and above all more rare if we refused the temptation to disentangle ourselves from an uncomfortable position and change to a more comfortable one, because freedom and comfort "bourgeoisify" thought. The best position for generating strong thoughts is Saint Lawrence's on

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his grill, though the grill alone is not enough, you also have to know how to think. Suddenly a shadow falls on Nivasio's face: the barber has combed his forelock over his eyes. In the darkness of his own hair ("like Magdalene" Nivasio Dolcemare thinks), thoughts come thicker and faster, a dense, shimmering forest of thoughts, thoughts like *straccastrucche.* Nivasio Dolcemare himself likens his thoughts to *straccastrucche*, which in those days were caramels that came wrapped in a paper which, when unwrapped, would set off a little display of fireworks. Then, just as suddenly, the scissors snip off his forelock and light returns to Nivasio Dolcemare's eyes. Who is this handsome adolescent before him, his face white and opaque, his eyes pensive in their deep sockets, his thick hair falling in blue-black waves over his forehead? A diagonal garland of painted flowers hides a crack in the mirror. Nivasio feels a deep tenderness, a deep self-satisfaction spread like warm, sweet milk through his veins. All around him the barbershop sparkles with mirrors multiplied in mirrors. There are the smells of lotions, the mingled breaths of the atomizers. It's the beginning of summer. The softness of evening. All at once the city's lights come on. The voices of passers-by can be heard, chattering feminine voices interrupted by the bells of the trolley and the putt-putt putt-putt of the first horseless carriages. Nivasio Dolcemare *sees* himself, sees his face in the mottled mirror with its painted flowers, sees his future as a musician, successes, women, and a love that is a more beautiful variation of Wagner's love for Matilde Wesendonk. *Curtain.*

Second Stage (1924). Nivasio is sitting on the couch next to Matilde. She is not the once-dreamed-of variation of Matilde Wesendonk, which would be inappropriate anyway seeing that in May of 1915 Nivasio Dolcemare abandoned music and dedicated himself to literature. (What Petrolini said jokingly, "the war wrecked me," was a serious reality for Nivasio Dolcemare the musician, because the 1915–1918 war had actually wrecked his musical destiny.) Nivasio and Matilde are silent, but until a few moments ago Nivasio had been talking incessantly, an extension of many other equally incessant conversations, of many walks together through the streets and parks of the city, of letters written with pounding heart in the middle of the night. Now the longed-for, dreaded silence has come, and Nivasio realizes with a certain apprehension (but with no surprise, so tested is his irremediable timidity) that it is the moment

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for the first kiss. At this point Matilde appears to faint and collapses on Nivasio's chest (leaving the initiative to Matilde is, of course, an effect of Nivasio's timidity and of his persistent uncertainty as to how and when certain things should be done, but it is also a stratagem, for, like Stendhal before him, Nivasio Dolcemare has made an art of his timidity, or better still a weapon which he wields with hypocritical skill). However, as Matilde collapses she hits Nivasio so hard in the chest that he is forced to lean his head back against the wall to recover. And at that moment he feels a strange chill, as if there were no protective layer of hair between his scalp and the wall. Nivasio Dolcemare turns pensive, and his first kiss with Matilde is troubled by the thought: "Am I bald?" *Curtain.*

Third Stage (1943). Nivasio Dolcemare walks down the darkened street, slowing his pace every now and then and extending a cautious foot to check for the curb. As he nears his house, a man's voice calls out to him from the darkness: "Excuse me, would you help me get this suitcase on my back? I'm on my way to the station and it's killing my hands." In the dark, Nivasio Dolcemare makes out the figure of a soldier standing next to an enormous suitcase, and goes over to give him the help he has asked for. As Nivasio Dolcemare reaches for the suitcase, the soldier snaps on a pocket flashlight and, having illuminated Nivasio Dolcemare's face, says in surprise: "Oh, sorry . . . " Needless to say, in reaction to the soldier's surprise, Nivasio Dolcemare summons all his strength; risking a hernia, he grabs the suitcase, heaves it off the ground, and with a magnificent sweep lifts it onto the soldier's back. *Curtain.*

Three stages in the life of Nivasio Dolcemare. And what transformations from one stage to the next! But how is it that Nivasio Dolcemare recognized these transformations each time only by external signs? In the dark, a soldier had asked a passer-by for help, but apologized when he saw the old man's face. Who is this old man? Nivasio Dolcemare feels no different now than he did on that evening when he sat in the barber's chair holding the dying Variag in his hands. If there is any difference, it is that now he feels more agile, loose, free, and ready to go over the walls. Who, then, are we talking about? Nivasio Dolcemare thinks he is one man, but in fact he is "two men": one keeps going; the other stays behind. And he feels that some day, soon perhaps, one of the two, having reached the end of his strength, will fall to the ground and remain there, while the other, who is the only one that interests him, the

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only one he "knows," will continue on his free and bold way. And then he will really be able to give vent to his will to go over the walls and not only over the walls but over the mountains as well, and beyond the earth, the sky, the stars; he will finally be able to fulfil the need for total freedom that urges him on; and infinite love, new relationships, new friendships, new passions will open to him: all the relationships, friendships, and passions of this and other times, of this and other worlds.

NAPHTHA

I was sitting at my writing table when the sharp smell of naphtha came to my nostrils. I had to give up the page I was working on. All the ideas I had gathered in my head and was in the process of formulating in words and setting down on paper were suddenly annihilated by the smell of naphtha. Summer is over; the preparations for winter are beginning. Yesterday I noticed a pair of soberly dressed armchairs in the living room, stripped of their gaily flowered summer shirts. Now evidently they are freeing the winter clothes from the closets that have sheltered them all summer, wrapped up in sheets like mummies and embalmed with naphtha. I had collected a little world in my head, and a bigger world unexpectedly destroyed it. For the odor of naphtha brings a world with it, a vast complex of memories that together make up the world of childhood; the world of my childhood; a world which, though I am more than half a century old, still remains the most fascinating period of my life, mysterious but with the friendliest mystery, dark but with a comforting darkness; the only period of which I would say, not that I would like to go back to it (the idea of going back is repugnant to me, only the future attracts me—now more than ever), but that I enjoy the memory of it and still find in that memory the warmth and comfort of a refuge. The odor of naphtha has awakened my memories of the mythical preparations for winter. The carpets are shaken out of their summer sleep, their "estivation." The curtains are changed. The house turns darker, the rooms no longer echo. The outside world (the common world) dies, the inner world is reborn: my world. That is why I love winter and prefer it to the other seasons. That is why I loved it even as a child. In winter, nature is taken away—the forests, valleys, and mountains of other people—and we are left with ourselves. Therein lies the sole condition of a freedom and a happiness worthy of being

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desired and pursued, which are the freedom and happiness we find in our own heads. In a chapter on noise, Schopenhauer inveighs against some carters who used to stop outside his house in Frankfort and crack their whips for the fun of it, because each crack of the whip *killed one of his thoughts.* It is certainly deplorable that the crack of a whip, an unexpected noise, an unexpected light, an unexpected smell like the smell of naphtha should be able to destroy the "personal world" we have worked so hard on and attempted with such jealous care to protect from the attacks of the external world. This unexpected smell of naphtha, then . . . And yet, if the unexpected smell of naphtha did destroy the little world I had put together and was setting down on paper, it replaced it with another, bigger world; which is the most total and radical destruction possible. "Destroy only what can be replaced." So runs one of Saint-Simon's basic themes, later taken up by Auguste Comte, and also cited by Madame de Staël in her *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la révolution française.* I agree. But it's difficult to replace things, and so it is not easy to destroy them. Fortunately! That is the despair of crude and barbarous men: they think they've destroyed something, but the thing they think they've destroyed comes back to life in front of them. Unable to believe their eyes, they wind up believing in ghosts. The tragedy of Macbeth could be reconsidered in this light: he's terrified by the survival of what he was unable to destroy because he could not replace it, which he mistakes for a ghost. People of less agile intelligence, who are less developed and more "earthy," are unable to pronounce *naphtha.* They say *naptha.* That is a result of vowelism, of keeping to the simple and ignoring the obscure or supposedly obscure, the "hidden" colors, which makes life an uninterrupted series of vowels, of open sounds, of manifest truths, of obvious facts. How barbaric! Refinement of the mind leads to mental consonantism. Unfortunately the majority of books published are an uninterrupted series of vowels, an aeiouism that starts on the first page and goes on to the last.

REALITY (Illusion and)

In 1890 the Shah of Persia went on an educational tour of Europe and kept a diary of the trip that is still considered a model of

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Persian prose. Some of his observations are even of interest to us, though we are not Persians. "In France, I paid a visit to the former French empress. She is old and stupid, but I did not tell her so. Why say something unpleasant?" "In Berlin, I went to the opera with my princes and ministers. There was a king on the stage and a woman who would not stop singing. At the end, he tied her to a stake and burned her alive. To me, and to my princes and ministers, this was a highly satisfying solution." The Shah believed in all sincerity that the soprano of the Berlin Opernhaus had been burned alive. Did Wagner suspect, while he was writing the *Valkyrie*, that he was composing such a tastelessly realistic melodrama? Abysses of incomprehension separate man from man, even when one of them is not the Shah of Persia.

SCAPEGOAT

The Hebrews used to take a goat, load their sins on its back, and send it out into the desert, considering this a way of purging their souls and remaining pure. The goat, which we call an emissary or scapegoat, the Hebrews called Azazel. It appears that the practice was not actually of Hebrew origin but was borrowed from the Egyptians. A smaller, less citified people is apt to take over the customs of the larger, more citified people it lives next to. And Azazel, according to the rabbis, is not a Hebrew name. Be that as it may, the goat Azazel remains a model for the solving of a moral problem (the notion of sin) by means of a practical act (heaping one's sins on the goat Azazel and thus freeing oneself of the wrong of having committed them). Man generally is unable to make use of ideas in their pure state. He needs to give them a visible, palpable form. Few of us have any reason to be surprised at the scapegoat, much less to laugh at it, because even today most of us live lives filled with all sorts of scapegoats. Art, too, to a great extent, has come from the use of scapegoats, and a totally abstract art, an art in which "the goat cannot be seen," is, especially in Latin countries, not considered art. The usual explanation is that *art is not philosophy*, which makes no sense because philosophy itself uses goats in order to be understood, as is demonstrated by Plato's philosophy (see the *Theatetus*) and even more clearly by the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who owes his great persuasiveness to the number of

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goats he used. The pure idea is suspect, which is why Pythagoreanism, spiritualism, and even idealism are looked upon with a certain mistrust. The supreme condition of civilization would be one in which all of life's problems were solved in a sprightly play of pure ideas, without the need of goats to give them consistency and corporality. Needless to say, a condition in which we would not have to *touch in order to believe* would be of great advantage to our health, but we can see that such a condition—I mean, is such a condition *humanly possible*? There's the rub. The main argument of the anti-spiritualists is that man by his very nature cannot and *ought not* to live or wish to live as a pure spirit. Catholics consider the mere wish a sin, because by wishing to live only spiritually man is in a certain sense wishing to be God. Preserving the goat is, at bottom, the necessary condition for maintaining order and respect for the hierarchy. I will add that if the honor of having invented the scapegoat does not go to the Hebrews, it also does not go to the Egyptians, or to any man. It goes to the fox. A fox has no sins but he often has fleas, and this is how he gets rid of them: he pulls up some grass, rolls it into a ball, takes the ball carefully in his teeth, and wades out into the river. As he goes deeper, the fleas move to the part of the fox that is still dry. The fox then puts his head underwater, all except his mouth, and the fleas run for safety onto the ball of grass. Finally the fox ducks his whole head under and in the same instant lets go of the ball of grass which floats away with its cargo of fleas. We don't know if the fox calls this ball of grass with its cargo of fleas Azazel.

WRITERS

According to Suetonius and Juvenal, who were both superb gossips, Caligula either instituted or re-instituted the games celebrated at Lyon (Lugdunum) before the altar of Augustus. At the conclusion of the games, the losers of the contest in eloquence had to buy prizes for the winners and award them themselves. As if that weren't enough, the losers also had to make speeches in praise of the winners. If any of the speeches was considered unworthy of the contest, the author had to erase it with his tongue, after which he was taken out and tossed into the Rhone.

Stendhal, noting down the story in the chapter on Lyon in his

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Memoirs of a Tourist, takes this "writers' punishment" as proof of Caligula's madness. Wrong. The hatred of writers is universal and everlasting, and if others don't show it, or don't "exercise" it as Caligula exercised it, that is because they lack Caligula's authority and the courage to use it. Why shouldn't someone who *makes a profession of intelligence* be hated? There will be no end to this variation on the class struggle, because men never tire of hating in others what they would like to be and cannot be themselves. And who does not want to be intelligent, or at least to seem so?

We all know what Napoleon made of himself, but the one thing he could not make of himself was the thing he most wanted to be: a writer. He began at fifteen, to say nothing of earlier attempts, with a sort of memorial of his youth (a curious parallel to the "memorial" of his last years) entitled *Stages of My Life.* Later he wrote a *History of Corsica* in epistolary form. He wrote the *Letter to Buttafuoco.* He wrote a small novel, *Clisson et Eugénie.* He wrote a dialogue: *Le Souper de Beaucaire.* And when he wasn't writing, he was planning to write, as he proclaimed to his troops after Waterloo: "I have agreed to go on living, that I may further serve your glory. *I shall write* of the great things we have done together." And when he wasn't writing himself, he made others write for him, as he did on St. Helena. In a sincere confession of his deepest wishes, Napoleon said he would have given Arcole, Wagram, and Austerlitz in exchange for a literary work that would brave the centuries, like those of the great authors he loved so much and re-read so often, in luck and out, meditating and writing notes in the margins.

There is not enough water in the Rhone to wash away a writer's sins: his *envied* sins.

[*Translated from the Italian by Richard Pevear*]

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ANDREW WATERMAN

From *Out for the Elements*

I am invited to a christening:
first, at the house, we drink a toast
(the baby girl sleeps on, unlistening,
shawled, bonneted); then set forth, most
on foot, for church. Hot sunshine blesses
beribboned toddlers in bright dresses,
flowers on Moss Side lawns ('Looks nice—
who'd think it muggers' paradise?');
godmother Eileen keeps foraying
across the street to chat to blokes
who are her night-time punters ('Folks
look down on me, but my work's paying
for my kids' food'). In wooden pews
tired feet are eased from high-heel shoes.

Duly the infant's soul 'is grafted
on to the body of Christ's Church'
('And just as well, so many shafted
my sister last year that you'd search
in vain to figure out the father').
Around the font our smiles grow rather
chastened. 'Christenings make me cry.'
'It's hope. Like weddings.' 'Jim and I
had such rows through our Blackpool honey-
moon, but making them up again
was heaven. Nowt to make up ten
years on. I slave, he gives me money.'
So, one more human vessel is
launched upon ritual promises.

This baby's grown life will be in a
different century from mine . . .
Tiring among the party's din (a
great deal of food and beer and wine

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has been put down, loud music's playing,
the children gone, most adults staying;
around the room some quarrels start,
it's growing dark outside), I part
the curtains, pause a while reflecting,
a little muzzily, about
mankind's perpetual reaching-out
to unknown future; recollecting
also how I stood yesterday
looking at mummies on display.

'O! Osiris live for ever!'
emblazoned the museum where
the long-dead were laid out. Whatever
convictions motivated their
arcane embalming many thousand
years ago with religious vows and
rites, it was what's left human stirred
my feelings: amputees interred
with spare mud feet; an infant wizened
in its reed coffin, scarcely born
before its future was withdrawn;
the royal Perenbast's bedizened
carrion. X-rays show beneath
the wraps disease, worn joints, bad teeth.

The simple ills that flesh is heir to
connect us with the distant past;
moving from frailties we share to
the tricks man's learned since Perenbast
was laid to rest though, raises thoughts of
her astonishment at all sorts of
phenomena could she come back:
astroturf, cars, the cling-film pack,
print, nuclear power, supersonic
travel, credit-cards, disco-noise,
non-biodegradable soft toys,
skyscrapers, phone-taps, electronic
space invader games, fruit-machines,
acrylic clothes, sex magazines.

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We've bent our minds to sociology,
radar, the Sydney Opera House,
psychiatry, hijacks, clones, ecology,
extruded chipboard, Mickey Mouse,
ceefax, the seaside pier, the quango,
hermeneutics, the Pill, the tango,
multinationals, the football mob,
and 'Danish Dentist on the Job,'
and holding mummy exhibitions;
reached for the moon they held in awe
along the Nile, with no time for
such antiquated inhibitions
sauntered upon its ancient face
to check if we can use the place.

Moon rises now, above these local
roofs and unfocused streets, as though
offering us a lucid focal
point for desires confused below,
a platform enabling perspective
on what is piecemeal and subjective
seen from where we must live, inside
our heads. I watch its brilliance glide
free of all geocentric weather:
the poets', lovers' moon; and now,
uncertain why but knowing how,
the scientists' who stepped light as feathers
out of their fragile craft, to stare
for something elemental there.

Touching empiricists, collecting
data with scoops to put in jars,
prodding, measuring, stooped, inspecting;
who turned to see among cold stars
harmoniously our blue-green planet
spin steadily and whole. Nor can it
for mystic, lover, astronaut,

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endure so; for no life-support
systems sustain unearthly visions
long—and all must re-enter through
spoiled atmosphere and touch-down to
a world that peers and makes incisions
in what's ineffable and mocks
us with its grey shards, moondust, rocks.

Like those long-buried, this new baby
ignorantly through its brief span
will quicken to whatever may be
our true desiderata. Man
cannot construe his teleologies,
always played false by the mythologies
and forms of his own time and place
settles for shapes that seem his case,
half-hearing larger orchestrations.
I leave the christening-party, stroll
under the dateless star-pricked bowl
on which all human civilisations,
today's, or Egypt's long ago,
melt as a single flake of snow.

And given time for adaptation
('You can't eat them, they're cigarettes,
breathe in the smoke for the sensation'—
'Don't you know how to play cassettes?'—
'We've got no slaves'—'No, use the toilet'—
'Your dress smells queer, you ought to boil it'—
and so forth), Perenbast might find
that what ticks in the human mind
in Manchester in 1980
is not much changed through all those years
since she once knew them: hopes and fears,
wanting love, and to love, such weighty
matters; a sense of wonder links
this christening with what built the Sphinx.

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Times change, but the deep aspirations
centred within mankind abide;
with few, if any, correlations
between how far they're satisfied
and our material wellbeing.
Any Victorian mill-hand seeing
what's owned by his great-great-grandson
might think utopia's begun;
and yet the ratio of pleasure
to misery's much as it was;
and only fools suppose because
we've central heating, planes, more leisure,
anaesthetics and extra years,
our lives are richer than Shakespeare's.

And when I was a kitchen-porter,
or penniless in slum bed-sits,
I had no less of what I sought, a
great deal of it since shot to bits,
some grown with time, and some that wouldn't.
Dean Swift, rich in his own day, couldn't
stand it; while peasant John Clare found
his Eden-fields and green lanes wound
towards the madhouse—elementary
surely, to see what was too much
for them was not their lot as such,
but being them. Staid Yorkshire gentry
doubtless found what intensely stirred
their neighbour Brontës quite absurd.

I have no claim on victim-status:
heterosexual, white, male,
salaried, fit and the same weight as
ever, and not insane, I fail
all the modish classifications
which social thought in caring nations
concocts so human unsuccess

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can blame 'the system' for its mess,
for not being rich, fulfilled, or Goethe;
a poor black sick fat lesbian wife
hasn't an enviable life
exactly, but can think what's hurt her
never was her fault—that's all been
explained by pundits on her screen.

Mine isn't a reactionary
attitude, but more humanist
than the assumptions customary
to the progressive socialist,
who denying blame explicitly
to personal failure, so implicitly
undermines the real credit due
to all who've struggled and come through,
all kind, unselfish acts—reducing
our moral life to puppetry.
I favour more equality
of wealth not as what's introducing
some brave new world, all sweetness, light,
but just because its fair and right.

Ends more hubristic will escape us:
how subtly Dostoevsky knew
the devious impulses that shape us,
how what we are and what we do
enact a complex dialectic
until Raskolnikov, his hectic
idealism of reason cowed
by feelings logic disavowed
when axing the vile moneylender,
finds in confession his relief,
new wholeness in the thaw of grief.
Collectively man's hopes are slender:
more likely we'll wipe ourselves out
than bring true commonwealth about.

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Not that the Bomb and concentration
camps make us really worse than when,
horse-back with no administration,
Attila ravaged Europe. Then
we weren't so dangerously efficient
at evil, that's all. And sufficient
use is still made of primitive
methods—babies whose parents give
them burns, for instance. Hatreds harden
men to enact what yesterday
occurred in Northern Ireland: they
impaled the woman with a garden
fork upon her own carpeted
lounge floor, and beat her father dead.

Few grounds for hope; yet much to honour
in people as they are. I heard
two girls all rings and ear-rings on a
bus pouring forth each trashy word
of some 'hit' song; and thought of Emma
Bovary, offered just like them a
meretricious and second-rate
range of expression for her great
hunger of spirit for life's beauty.
Our public world proposes what
we need is more of what we've got,
consumer-goods topped with tutti-frutti.
Yet listening around finds out
most know that's not what they're about.

Intellectuals fear 'the masses,'
or idealise; won't let be
people much apter (when the Bass is
flowing) than they whose tendency
in talk's impersonal or woolly,
to utter their deep being fully;
whose prejudice and platitude

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are free of cant; from whom obtrude
germinal yearning, satisfactions
charging them, yet so marginal
to what the ads, political
parties, ideologues and factions
are on about; and some will boast,
some shyly tell, what matters most.

It might be woodwork, keeping whippets,
gardening, wild-life, music, their
children or friends, a lakeland trip. It's
true people breathe what's in the air,
are superficially excited
at wins by Manchester United,
soap-opera, murder-mysteries,
or 'My Val's passed six GCEs.'
Beneath induced false-consciousness is
a truer knowledge though, its flames
famished for life; its feelings, aims,
knit to what poetry expresses.
And rare, but not elitist, art
keeps faith with the bruised common heart.

True poetry, articulating
what's smothered in our slipshod lives,
restoring us, through its creating,
to truths by which mankind survives,
even when most abstruse or vatic
thus is profoundly democratic,
against the casual tide that tugs
us from ourselves, our daily drugs.
And the poetic imagination
is moral too in making us
feel other lives, transmuted thus
'by sympathy to an incarnation
of the spirit it breathes'—so said
Shelley. Intolerance is ill-read.

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The people I like, or find least galling,
are loners, writers, plain folk, brats.
May I continue my appalling
relationships with bureaucrats:
collectively on a committee
mild-mannered dons would without pity
concur in genocide to keep
the boat from rocking. The least deep
chatter of sales-girls, clerks, yobs, dockers
—'This pub's where shop-tarts drink, we're made'—
'Get him'—'Blue Bols and lemonade'—
'My friend's got freckles on her knockers'—
still helps us through to closing time,
while Caesar's staff hatch global crime.

In state department rooms expensive
men in well-tailored suits confer.
It looks completely inoffensive.
They itemise, agree, demur,
take notes. A clock ticks like their quiet
talk. They banter on lawns; imply at
press conferences their urgent quest
for measures in the interest
of peace, stability, whatever.
So, elsewhere, something that has tried
to come to pass is 'pacified,'
stamped upon by a boot marked NEVER.
Chile, Vietnam, Afghanistan,
bury their dead as best they can.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Solzhenitsyn *versus* the Last Revolutionary

SOLZHENITSYN'S COLLEAGUES AT THE WRITERS' UNION, those who weren't simply KGB agents, were of course practitioners of socialist realism because it's the sole permissible Soviet artistic genre, and no doubt he would have been pleased to rub their noses in the following definition of it: "The realism consists in imitating provincial daguerreotypes of the third quarter of the last century; the 'socialist' style—in using tricks of salon photography to represent events that have never taken place. One cannot without revulsion and horror read the poems and novels or view the paintings and sculptures in which officials armed with pen, brush, or chisel, and supervised by officials armed with revolvers, glorify the 'great leaders of genius.' " No doubt Solzhenitsyn would have been equally pleased to endorse the observation that "the present ruling stratum . . . considers itself called upon not only to control spiritual creation politically, but also to prescribe its roads of development. The method of command-without-appeal extends in like measure to the concentration camps, to scientific agriculture, and to music. The central organ of the party prints anonymous directive editorials having the character of military orders, in architecture, literature, dramatic arts, the ballet, to say nothing of philosophy, natural science, and history." Certainly Solzhenitsyn would have agreed that by the time of the purges Stalin "could buy consciences like sacks of potatoes," and that "*L'état c'est moi* is almost a liberal formula by comparison with the actualities of Stalin's totalitarian regime. Louis XIV identified himself with both the state and the Church—but . . . Stalin can justly say, unlike *le Roi Soleil, la société c'est moi.*" Solzhenitsyn might even have given his blessing to this rather sacrilegious gloss on Stalin's excommunication of all his revolutionary comrades: "Of Christ's twelve Apostles Judas alone proved to be traitor. But if he had acquired power, he would have represented the other eleven Apostles as traitors, and also all the lesser Apostles whom Luke numbers as seventy." The author of

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every one of the foregoing quotations is Leon Trotsky,[1] assassinated over forty years ago by a Stalin hit-man; and Solzhenitsyn ought to be delighted to have such early and incontestable corroboration of his own independently arrived-at feelings and convictions, but in fact he never mentions Trotsky except to link him with the other mischief-makers, he can't bring himself to cite anything at all which would oblige him to acknowledge Trotsky as in power and in exile the principled, untiring, and fearless opponent of Stalin, the preëminent writer of that place and time, the pariah who outlived everything except his irrepressible talents.

In *The Gulag Archipelago*, for instance, brushing aside all the "enigmatic" and "inexplicable" talk about the confessions by the defendants in the Moscow frameup trials of the 'thirties, Solzhenitsyn notes that these party leaders "had, in their revolutionary pasts, known short, easy imprisonment, short periods in exile, and had never even had a whiff of hard labor. . . . Until they were arrested and imprisoned in the Lubyanka, they hadn't the slightest idea what a real prison was nor what the jaws of unjust interrogation were like." Perfectly true; and he goes on to maintain that if Trotsky had been among the defendants he too would have cracked:

> There is no basis for assuming that if Trotsky had fallen into those jaws, he would have conducted himself with any less self-abasement, or that his resistance would have proved stronger than theirs. He had had no occasion to prove it. He, too, had known only easy imprisonment, no serious interrogations, and a mere two years of exile in Ust-Kut. The terror Trotsky inspired as Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council [i.e. founder and commander of the Red Army during two continuously embattled years of civil war] was something he acquired very cheaply, and does not at all demonstrate any true strength of character or courage. Those who have condemned many others to be shot often wilt at the prospect of their own death. The two kinds of toughness are not connected.

But, as Solzhenitsyn himself concedes, a number of the accused very likely *did* hold out: "For some reason, they did not, after all, put on public trial Rudzutak, Postyshev, Yenukidze, Chubar, Kosior . . . even though their names would have embellished the trials.

[1] THE PROPHET ARMED, by *Isaac Deutscher*. Oxford University Press. $22.50. THE PROPHET UNARMED, by *Isaac Deutscher*. Oxford University Press. $22.50. THE PROPHET OUTCAST, by *Isaac Deutscher*. Oxford University Press. $22.50.

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They put on trial the most compliant. A selection was made after all." Moreover Solzhenitsyn's reference to Trotsky's leadership of the Red Army is disingenuous. The "terror" inspired by a leader in a desperate civil war—Lincoln, for example, who like Trotsky lent his authority to the shooting of soldiers for desertion or dereliction of duty—differs significantly from the Stalin "peacetime" terror of eliminating "just for the hell of it" (as Solzhenitsyn says) a quarter of the country's population. (Vladimir Bukovsky: "It was a tremendous shock to learn that your countrymen have been involved in killing sixty million people. . . . A totalitarian state has to try to put you within a bloody circle—everyone has to be stained with blood." Maybe Solzhenitsyn's nerves told him that only if *all* the actors of the October Revolution—Lenin and Trotsky and the rest as well as Stalin—were pushed far back into the shadows deep inside the bloody circle could he himself stay completely out.) The fact is that irrespective of the political issues Trotsky, with no previous military training or experience whatever, proved to be one of the great military leaders of history, within months after the utter disintegration of the Tsarist army putting together an army that protected the revolutionary enclave centering on Moscow and ultimately defeated the White and foreign-interventionist forces that often hugely outnumbered his own. His headquarters was a military train that traveled to every front bringing supplies, collecting information, inspiriting the troops: he often showed up in the thick of battle with bullets flying; during the siege of Petrograd, over the objections of Lenin who thought it should be abandoned, he insisted on defending it (according to an eyewitness, "Trotsky's orders, clear and precise, sparing nobody and exacting from everybody the utmost exertion and accurate, rapid execution of combat orders" immediately rallied the defenders), on one critical occasion he galloped in on horseback among troops who had been panicked by the appearance of British tanks on the other side, exhorted and persuaded them to turn and face the enemy, and led them to victory: it sounds like *Boys' Life* but it's in the record and Solzhenitsyn must have read the accounts of it with an intransigent mind and an aching heart.

Indeed no historical figure gives a more seamless impression of being immune to the risk of self-abasement even under torture than Trotsky: his superb confidence in his abilities and beliefs is important, he has nothing of the opportunist or hanger-on, he's

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one of those human beings who seem physically and morally incapable of fear, but he isn't a fanatic, neither his serenity nor his indignation is incompatible with geniality and a sense of humor: Solzhenitsyn ought to have considered the example of the Christian martyrs, many of whom though they hadn't been hardened by preliminary ordeals put up quite cheerfully with their last rites. (Solzhenitsyn despite his experience of long, hard imprisonment so lost his presence of mind when the secret police came calling that he opened the door to them and a moment later was furiously reproaching himself; Trotsky, though lacking such experience, kept the door locked—Solzhenitsyn would have known the story!—and made them break it down, refused to go along with them, they were compelled to carry him away bodily: the arresting officer in charge who had been a subordinate of his on the military train burst out, "Shoot me, Comrade Trotsky! Shoot me!" but Trotsky persuaded him to pull himself together.) After Lenin's incapacitation and death, at the regime's violent meetings—inkwells and books as well as threats and insults were hurled at speakers who dared to defend themselves against Stalin's calumnies—when Stalin had already stacked the government with thugs and stooges and his hangman personality had already terrorized the other old Bolsheviks (Kamenev and Zinoviev; Bukharin, who babbled in panic and prophecy, "He's the new Genghis Khan!"), Trotsky while the others trembled in their seats and waited for the sky to fall treated him with outrage and loathing (shouting at him over the din of his stooges, "Gravedigger of the Revolution!"; Stalin stood up in agitation and rushed out of the room, slamming the door behind him) or with ostentatious contempt (reading novels during sessions where Stalin had rigged the proceedings past hope and could do his dirty work in peace). Nor was it as if he didn't know whom he was dealing with: in his diary he recalled Kamenev's having told him about spending a day of " 'heart-to-heart' conversation" with Dzerzhinsky (founder of the Soviet secret police) and Stalin. "After the wine, on the balcony, the talk touched upon a sentimental subject—personal tastes and predilections, something of that sort. Stalin said, 'The greatest delight is to mark one's enemy, prepare everything, avenge oneself thoroughly, and then go to sleep.' " The enemy of such an enemy knew he was marked for death but notwithstanding never deflected or renounced an hour of his activities or recreations—he loved to go

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hunting and fishing in wild and remote areas—to limit the risk; till his last day he never stopped anatomizing with unsparing attentiveness the nature and conduct of the gravedigger of the Revolution; and he turned on and mauled like a wounded lion the assassin who had just driven an Alpine ice-axe into the back of his skull.

Solzhenitsyn needs to demonstrate the hatefulness and *baseness* of the despotic regime *ab initio* and *ad nauseam* from Lenin through Stalin (hence his comic-book image of Lenin, canting petty-bourgeois "hero" of *Lenin in Zurich*, reduced to a piddling stream of consciousness: "To feel alarm in the face of threats means that you are prepared, not that you are panicky"), but no sequence of human associations is so uncomplicated, ogres are exceptions, things keep changing (dialectically?) all the time, even Solzhenitsyn believes that with a little more pluck and luck Stalin's heir Khrushchev might have accomplished wonders. In *August 1914* Solzhenitsyn intends to show that if not for their "wooden-headed" generals the Imperial Russian Armies might well have defeated the Germans and thus precluded the Revolution; in the same book he scornfully dismisses the populist determinism that Tolstoy insists on in *War and Peace*; but everywhere else he's unwilling to suppose for a moment that in the Soviet Union the obvious favoring conditions for tyranny and the undeniable beginnings of it might not necessarily have developed into the Stalin nightmare if somebody other than Stalin—say, Trotsky—had succeeded Lenin. People matter; individuals matter: though, coincidentally, Trotsky out of his Marxist determinism as well as Solzhenitsyn out of his painful hatred of the Revolution can hardly allow for the possibility that things might have been different if the people in charge had been different.

Trotsky like Solzhenitsyn is at his best piling up, sorting out for precise definition, and with every proper rhetorical emphasis imprinting on the conscience of the world the irrefutable historical evidence of irresponsibility, stupidity, malice, villainy. Further, Trotsky used such evidence as a basis for warnings and predictions that if they had been taken seriously might have headed off the Second World War. For instance, already in exile, he foresaw the Hitler horror down to its grisly details long before Hitler took power, urged an immediate coalition between the Soviet Union and Western Europe to prevent his accession, argued that unless Hitler was blocked the German working class would be destroyed

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and there would be a world war within a decade; but the line laid down by Stalin and followed heel-and-toe by the German Communists was that Hitler would do their job for them by overthrowing the German democratic republic whereupon they would push him aside and pick up the pieces. Nor were the British any smarter: Trotsky in a 1933 article remarked how happily British diplomats paying their respects to the new German Chancellor had applauded his "moderation" and "peaceful intentions"—Hitler talked this way every other week in 1933—because after all they "had expected to meet a madman brandishing an axe; instead they met a man hiding his revolver in a pocket—what a relief!" (A few years later Bernard Shaw, who took pride in being a reasonable Fabian-type socialist unlike those excitable Russians, couldn't quite bring himself to believe in accordance with the testimony at the Moscow trials that Trotsky had conspired with the German General Staff, the Mikado of Japan, and seventeen Soviet engineers to disrupt Soviet railway service and poison reservoirs, but he rebuked Trotsky for as it were responding in kind—that is, denouncing Stalin as a bloody tyrant and an unprecedented forger of history: "Trotsky spoils it all by making exactly the same sort of attack on Stalin. Now I have spent nearly three hours in Stalin's presence and observed him with keen curiosity, and I find it just as hard to believe that he is a vulgar gangster as that Trotsky is an assassin." Regrettable that Shaw didn't pop off the train for a couple of hours in Berlin and discover what a lovely chap Hitler was too. When as a political refugee Trotsky was refused a visa by the British Labour government, he commented that "This 'one act' comedy on the theme of democracy and its principles might have been written by Bernard Shaw, if the Fabian fluid which runs in his veins had been strengthened by as much as five per cent of Jonathan Swift's blood"; though it must be added that Shaw was one of the celebrities who sent letters protesting the government's decision.)

But Trotsky like Solzhenitsyn has a need to impose his abstract historical grid on the convolutions and accidents of individual human lives. When you're listening to Solzhenitsyn Bolsheviks and (their second- and third-generation clones) Communists are fools or scoundrels or weaklings or, if not, then merely well-intentioned homunculi with one fatal flaw (they are wrong): a thesis that undermines his fiction because there he's making such an effort to be

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abstractly *fair!* and it shows in his judicious representation of Types A through B of these boring no-goods (what Harold Rosenberg, in another connection, called "the herd of independent minds"), whereas it hardly bothers his memoirs and histories in which either affection complicates things satisfactorily (as with his friend Tvardovsky, editor of *Novy Mir*), or he can personally lord it over everybody else and snarl and scream to his heart's content. Or, when you're listening to Trotsky (even in his most genial books, *My Life* and the only readable Marxist history as well as the only history of a revolution written by one of its leaders, *The History of the Russian Revolution*), kings and constitutional democrats and Mensheviks are fools or scoundrels or weaklings or, if not, then merely well-intentioned homunculi with one fatal flaw (they are wrong)—as the slightest lively patch of characterization will prove at once: "Both [Tsar] Nicholas and Louis XVI give the impression of people overburdened by their job, but at the same time unwilling to give up even a part of those rights which they are unable to use"; "[Lieber] was a Menshevik . . . with a long revolutionary past, very sincere, very temperamental, very eloquent, very limited, and passionately desirous of showing himself an inflexible patriot and iron statesman . . . beside himself with hatred of Bolsheviks"; "A well-read rather than educated man, with considerable but unintegrated learning, Chernov [a member of Kerensky's constitutional democratic government that was overthrown by the Bolsheviks] always had at his disposition a boundless assortment of appropriate quotations, which for a long time caught the imagination of Russian youth without teaching them much"; and this double portrait of two friends from left and right of the Marxist spectrum who split on the rock of ideology because the left was right and so the right got left:

> Lenin was "hard" and Martov "soft." And they both knew it. Lenin would glance at Martov, whom he highly esteemed, with a critical and somewhat suspicious look; and Martov, feeling this glance, would look down and his thin shoulders would twitch nervously. When they met and talked afterwards, at least in my presence, one missed the friendly inflection and the jests. Lenin would look beyond Martov as he talked, while Martov's eyes would grow glassy under his drooping and never quite clean pince-nez. And when Lenin spoke to me of Martov, there was a peculiar intonation in his voice: "Who said that? Julius?"—and the name Julius was pronounced in a special way, with a slight empha-

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sis, as if to give warning: "A good man, no question about it, even a remarkable one, but much too soft."

Those thin shoulders and especially that never quite clean pince-nez tell us all (and more) about the well-intentioned small soul that makes the mistake of being mistaken; but, in an article he wrote when the Bolsheviks had already had four years to stake their claim to "proletarian democracy," Martov shrugged his lean shoulders with electric intensity and wiped his pince-nez sparkling spotless with Jiffy Lens Lube as he spoke for himself shortly before he quit the country for good:

> The Soviet State has not established in any instance electiveness and recall of public officials. . . . It has not suppressed the professional police. . . . It has not done away with social hierarchy in production. It has not lessened the total subjection of the local community to the power of the State. On the contrary, the Soviet State shows a tendency in the opposite direction. It shows a tendency toward intensified centralism of the State, a tendency toward the utmost possible strengthening of the principles of hierarchy and compulsion. It shows a tendency toward the development of a more special apparatus of repression than before. . . .
>
> . . . [The Bolsheviks] continue to repudiate democratic parliamentarism. But they no longer repudiate, at the same time, those instruments of State power *to which parliamentarism is a counterweight within bourgeois society*: bureaucracy, police, a permanent army with commanding cadres that aren't accountable to the soldiers, etc.

Three years later Lenin was dead, weepy Bukharin the coward, time-server, and cynic whom Lenin in his Testament called "the favorite of the party" was making sour jokes about Soviet "democracy" ("There are many political parties in the Soviet Union: one in power, the others in jail"), Trotsky was being howled down at meetings of the Central Committee, Stalin had taken over, and Martov's well-warranted apprehensions were rapidly turning into full-fledged realities (but Solzhenitsyn, who doesn't like Mensheviks either, doesn't cite poor Martov either).

The trouble with a comprehensive ideology like Marxism (though Trotsky denies it's an ideology except for "vulgar Marxists," he contends it's properly only a tool) is that once it stops looking quite right down to the tiniest detail it doesn't look right even in the tiniest detail and all the answers reverse themselves into questions. For instance, in Trotsky's *History*, Lenin demands the

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"immediate transfer of land to the peasants" without governmental deliberations (Kerensky's government is still in power) or the passing of laws: " 'The important thing for us [says Lenin] is revolutionary initiative: the laws should be the result of it. If you wait until the law is written, and do not yourself develop revolutionary energy, you will get neither law nor land.' Are not these simple words [comments Trotsky] the voice of all revolutions?" They certainly are, as they are also the voice of every other headlong and self-justifying mass action, the consequences of which, as Martov is pointing out and prophesying, as Trotsky himself pointed out and prophesied a dozen years earlier in his controversies with Lenin, somehow veer off from the immediate and longed-for advantage: as it happened, Lenin had the revolutionary initiative, law was low on his agenda, and when the Bolsheviks came to power the peasants got neither law nor land. (Solzhenitsyn, having awaited in a tizzy of impatience the upheaval in the Soviet state that was bound to result from the publication of his subversive books, nevertheless after it fails to happen concedes wryly that history is safer with "gradualists, in whose hands the fabric of events does not tear.") Trotsky is a less convincing writer when he expounds the ideology of mass action than when he concentrates narratively on the mass action itself in its colors and eddyings of the moment—e.g. a Petrograd workers' demonstration which a detachment of Cossacks seems ready to break up (though even here the moral gets more and more pat till at the end he makes it explicit):

> Cutting their way with the breasts of their horses, the officers first charged through the crowd. Behind them, filling the whole width of the Prospect, galloped the Cossacks. Decisive moment! But the horsemen, cautiously, in a long ribbon, rode through the corridor just made by the officers. "Some of them smiled," Kayurov recalls, "and one of them gave the workers a good wink." This wink was not without meaning. The workers were emboldened with a friendly, not hostile, kind of assurance, and slightly infected the Cossacks with it. The one who winked found imitators. In spite of renewed efforts from the officers, the Cossacks, without openly breaking discipline, failed to force the crowd to disperse, but flowed through it in streams. This was repeated three or four times and brought the two sides ever closer together. Individual Cossacks began to reply to the workers' questions and even to enter into momentary conversations with them. Of discipline there remained but a thin transparent shell that threatened to break through any second.

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> The officers hastened to separate their patrol from the workers, and, abandoning the idea of dispersing them, lined the Cossacks out across the street as a barrier to prevent the demonstrators from getting to the center. But even this did not help: standing stock-still in perfect discipline, the Cossacks did not hinder the workers from "diving" under their horses. The revolution does not choose its paths: it made its first steps toward victory under the belly of a Cossack's horse.

And Trotsky is entirely convincing and magnetic only when his subject isn't political at all, as when laying out for every eye to see Stalin's all-purpose non-denominational crassness and savagery, or leaving politics and ideology altogether to present these images of his childhood in *My Life*:

> I am with my mother in Bobrinetz, visiting the Z. family, where there is a little girl of two or three. I am the bridegroom, the little girl is the bride. The children are playing on the painted floor of the parlor; the little girl fades away; the little boy is standing dazed and petrified beside a chest of drawers. His mother and the hostess come in. His mother looks at the boy, then at the puddle beside him, and then at the boy again, shakes her head reproachfully and says: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" The boy looks at his mother, at himself, and at the puddle, as if it all had nothing whatever to do with him.
>
> "Never mind," the hostess says, "the children have played too long."
>
> The little boy feels neither shame nor repentance. How old was he then? About two years, possibly three. . . .
>
> I remember another early scene that took place in our main kitchen. Neither my father nor my mother is at home. The cook and the maid and their guests are there. My older brother, Alexander, who is at home for the holidays, is also buzzing about, standing on a wooden shovel, as if on a pair of stilts, and dancing on it across the earthen floor. I beg my brother to let me have the shovel, and try to climb up on it, but I fall down and cry. My brother picks me up, kisses me, and carries me out of the kitchen in his arms.
>
> I must have been about four years old when someone put me on the back of a big gray mare as gentle as a sheep, with neither bridle nor saddle, only a rope halter. I spread my legs wide apart and held on to the mane with both hands. The mare quietly took me to a pear-tree and walked under a branch, which caught me across the middle. Not realizing what the matter was, I slid over the mare's rump, and hit the grass. I was not hurt, only puzzled.

(Mauriac in his *Memoirs* rated Trotsky's evocations of childhood with Tolstoy's and Gorky's. Mauriac was also the Nobel Laureate who pushed Solzhenitsyn's candidacy for the Nobel Prize: "But

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then Mauriac," writes Solzhenitsyn in *his* memoirs, "God rest his soul, started his dogged campaign to obtain a Nobel Prize for me, and spoiled the game for *our masters* once again: if they exiled me now it would look like a riposte to Mauriac, and a stupid one." Yet Solzhenitsyn turns a blind eye to Trotsky's memoirs as well as to Mauriac's admiration of them.)

Isaac Deutscher's triple-decker biography of Trotsky is one of the perennial biographies, sympathetic and scrupulous throughout its encyclopedic length, continuously illuminating on history and politics, crammed with information all of which is interesting and some of which (having been drawn from Trotsky's closed archives by permission of his widow) isn't publicly available anywhere else; but on occasion it's distinctly sectarian and political because Deutscher when he steps forward and speaks his mind is even more of a deterministic and optimistic Marxist than Trotsky, believes that the Revolution would have occurred without Lenin or Trotsky, believes that Stalin in spite of himself was a servant of history, a homicidal barbarian involuntarily doing the essential dirty work of the Revolution, viz. the industrialization of the economy and the collectivization of agriculture which Trotsky had advocated earlier and Stalin had long objected to, which (as Deutscher believes) in a country as backward as Russia had to be done by compulsion and terror, and barring which the Soviet state would have foundered and vanished (of course he believes, as Solzhenitsyn thunderously doesn't, that such an eventuality would have been bad not only for Russia but for the world). So for Deutscher the ultimate and paradoxical greatness of Trotsky is that in his very failure and obloquy, in exile, through the vileness of his mortal enemy, and after his death he triumphed as the conscious and voluntary servant of history.

At any rate the Marxist historian hasn't a doubt that Trotsky deserves a sizable historical niche (to point a moral and adorn a tale), whereas the raging survivor of Gulag denies that Trotsky deserves anything more than a hole to bury him in (as Khrushchev had the embalmed and deified Stalin dragged from his slab next to Lenin in the Great Mausoleum and buried out of sight in a hole in the Kremlin wall). But if the rule is that historical niches or holes in the wall are prepared for their occupants long in advance by history, then the deterministic Marxist Trotsky is an exception: unlike Lenin and Stalin, who give the impression of having been com-

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pletely accounted for and used up by history, Trotsky is a kind of luxury, an extravagance, not only because he lost the chance to do as much as he might have done but because whatever he had had the chance to do would not have been enough, he was all excess energy and surplus value, he went out of his way to attract the lightning, took pains to stand out and off from others even beyond the natural conspicuousness and exuberance of his talents: according to Lunacharsky, first Soviet Commissar of Education, who met him in Geneva in 1905,

> Trotsky was then unusually elegant, in distinction from all of us, and very beautiful [a few years later Stalin, already though not yet openly an enemy, spoke privately of Trotsky's "beautiful uselessness"]. That elegance of his, and especially a kind of careless, high-and-mighty manner of talking with no-matter-whom, struck me very unpleasantly. I looked with great disapproval on that dandy, who swung his leg over his knee, and dashed off with a pencil an outline of the extemporaneous speech he was going to make at the meeting. But Trotsky spoke very well. . . .
>
> A tremendous imperiousness and a kind of inability or unwillingness to be at all caressing and attentive to people, an absence of that charm which always surrounded Lenin [and which Solzhenitsyn refused to dramatize or acknowledge in his fictional image of "Lenin" in Zurich], condemned Trotsky to a certain loneliness. . . .
>
> For work in political groups Trotsky seemed little fitted, but in the ocean of historic events, where such personal features lose their importance, only his favorable side came to the front. . . .

In public argument he characteristically went too far, overleaped the proprieties for the sake of panache, ground his opponents into the dust. Martov (the skeleton at the feast), just after the October Revolution, which he called a *coup d'état*, threatened to lead his group out of the Congress of Soviets unless the Bolsheviks democratized the government by including the smaller left parties. Trotsky came to the platform, stood face to face with Martov, and answered him: "You are miserable, isolated individuals. You are bankrupt. You have played out your role. Go where you belong: to the dustheap of history!" (And Trotsky's role here was megaphone to the accursed dialectic.) He had no doubt that history was in course of making the necessary discriminations, he was unafraid of calling down on himself historical retribution or personal revenge, he never saw any reason to curry favor or hedge his bets. In his early controversies with Lenin he argued with such (as it might

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have seemed to Lenin) supererogatory and insulting vehemence that their relations, even when for years they were firm political allies and virtually shared state power, never became relaxed and intimate; and one late effect might have been the comparative coolness of the tone of Lenin's Testament toward Trotsky, which encouraged Stalin and his accomplices not only to brazen out the Testament's recommendation that Stalin be removed from his post but eventually to deny the Testament's very existence. Nor did Trotsky do any better with petty bureaucrats, who feared and hated him because he never cultivated them (as Stalin did from the outset: colleagues, drinking-companions, fall-guys, suspects arrested and tortured, counterrevolutionary wreckers exposed, criminals shot as they developed from one use to the next). Molotov, whom Lenin called "the best filing-clerk in the Soviet Union" and who must have had some sort of agility because he was almost the only jumped-up clerk who survived his lord and master Stalin, was secretary of the Central Committee when Trotsky strode in one day to make a complaint about the incompetence of Molotov's office: " 'Comrade Trotsky,' Molotov stammered out, 'Comrade Trotsky, not everyone can be a genius.' " At first it was impossible not to grant his abilities and achievements. He was twenty-six when he led the 1905 Revolution as President of the Petrograd Soviet. In October 1917, while Lenin was in hiding from Kerensky's police, Trotsky organized and led the uprising that brought the Bolsheviks to power: "You see, the great revolution is come," remarked the Bolshevik Uritsky, "and no matter how intelligent Lenin is, he begins to dim a little beside the genius of Trotsky"; "All the work of practical organization of the insurrection," wrote Stalin reviewing the event as editor of *Pravda,* "was conducted under the immediate leadership of the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It is possible to declare with certainty that the swift passing of the garrison to the side of the Soviet, and the bold execution of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the party owes principally and first of all to Comrade Trotsky." Lenin himself proposed that as leader of the insurrection which brought the government to power Trotsky should head the Soviet government, but deferring to Lenin's seniority Trotsky refused. With typical superabundance, as it were incidentally, Trotsky may have been the greatest or in any case the most persuasive orator ever, speaking several times a day for months on end capturing

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and holding immense miscellaneous audiences with hour after hour of impromptu political disquisition:

> I consider Trotsky [writes Lunacharsky] probably the greatest orator of our times. I have heard in my day all the great parliamentary and popular orators of Socialism, and very many of the famous orators of the bourgeois world, and I should have difficulty in naming any of them, except Jaurès, whom I might place beside Trotsky.
>
> Effective presence, beautiful broad gesture, mighty rhythm of speech, loud, absolutely tireless voice, wonderful compactness, literariness of phrase, wealth of imagery, scorching irony, flowing pathos, and an absolutely extraordinary logic, really steel-like in its clarity—those are the qualities of Trotsky's speech. He can speak epigrammatically, shoot a few remarkably well-aimed arrows, and he can pronounce such majestic political discourses as I have heard elsewhere only from Jaurès. I have seen Trotsky talk for two and a half to three hours to an absolutely silent audience, standing on their feet, and listening as though bewitched to an enormous political treatise.

He was a leader without followers, a leader by excellence and accomplishment only, and as soon as Lenin died the others bared their teeth at him because he was vulnerable and superior. Zinoviev, a vain and spiteful man who resented Trotsky's precedence and regarded himself as the senior partner in the triumvirate with Kamenev and Stalin against Trotsky, very soon proposed that Trotsky be expelled from the party, but Stalin (who, as Bukharin remarked with rueful admiration, had a genius for gradation and timing—i.e. for avenging and murdering degree by degree, all in good time) vetoed the idea: "Today they chop off one head, tomorrow another, the day after tomorrow still another—who, in the end, will be left with us in the party?" (Actually Zinoviev hadn't said a word about chopping off heads, and it's futile but fascinating to wonder how metaphorical or sly Stalin was being at this moment. Probably he was just taking advantage of a momentary opportunity to appear generous and forgiving —made him seem wise and presidential, with malice toward none—because he knew the time wasn't ripe yet, but images of sanctioned bloody murder must have occurred to him as regularly as hunger or thirst.) Bukharin too, toady and "theoretician" to Stalin, snapped and fulminated obediently at the Trotskyists as if he himself were the wild beast. In the end, all in good time, nobody was left but Stalin.

If one believes in chance, luck, accident, character, personality,

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and will, a great deal of the trouble came from Lenin's continuous—until just before the end of his life—esteem for Stalin. Trotsky himself, working in his last years on his biography of Stalin, tried to puzzle it out, as Trotsky's widow recollects: "Stalin's origins were obscure, the part he played in 1917 difficult to establish, and the reasons for the warmth Lenin had shown him before he came to know him better—much too late in the day—were hard to discover." At times it appears that Lenin felt toward Stalin something of the hero-worship a timid and well-behaved schoolboy might feel toward cardsharps and burglars, *real* men: "During the civil war," Trotsky recalls, "when certain sections of the army, usually the cavalry branches, became unruly and went in for violence and roistering, Lenin was likely to say, 'Hadn't we better send Stalin there? He knows how to talk with people of that kind.' " (Lenin was addressing this wistful remark to the founder and leader of the Red Army, who had "conjured up an army out of nothing!" as Lenin proudly exclaimed to Gorky, whose unexampled gift for winning "people of that kind" over—any number of workers, peasants, or soldiers from a single interlocutor to immense gatherings—was as famous and uncontested as his intrepidity plunging directly into battle in the vanguard of his troops as soon as he arrived at any of the active fronts.) One of Trotsky's early disagreements with Lenin had to do with the question of supporting raids on Russian state banks to finance the party: Trotsky disapproved, Lenin didn't wish to discuss it but supported it, and the chief of the bank-robbers was Stalin (a *practical* man).

The first general secretary of the party was Yakov Sverdlov, by all accounts an intelligent and reliable man who was inconsiderate enough to die young, only two years after the Revolution, and who had seemed so irreplaceable that at his death the Central Committee left the post vacant for years. Slowly but surely, however, Stalin moved in on the appointment *faute de mieux* and once he had it set about packing the offices, bureaus, departments, commissariats with flunkeys whose unquestioning devotion to him was guaranteed by their unfitness for the jobs he had bestowed on them as well as by their grudges against his colleagues (e.g. Trotsky, who was notorious for believing that the obligation of a job-holder was to do his job). Stalin had already so immovably entrenched himself before Lenin's death that at length even Lenin grew uneasy, at first vaguely and impersonally: in Deutscher's account "he said that of-

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ten he had the uncanny sensation which a driver has when he suddenly feels that his vehicle is not moving in the direction in which he steers it. Powerful forces diverted the Soviet state from its proper road: the semi-barbarous peasant individualism of Russia, pressure from capitalist surroundings, and above all, the deep-seated native traditions of uncivilized absolutist government." (And beyond everything Stalin, who had disconnected the steering mechanism from below and set the wheels on the iron tracks straight to his version of pig heaven.) Trotsky didn't help either. He alone had distrusted and despised Stalin from the beginning; for years he had tried to warn or caution Lenin and was put off; when Lenin started worrying about the succession after he had suffered his first stroke, he several times pleaded with Trotsky to become Vice-Premier, but Trotsky, perhaps in something of a pet, irritated him by declining each time, on the ground that he had more important things to do in the government (he was still Commissar of War): it was Stalin who placed Trotsky's name in nomination, Stalin who complained of Trotsky's irresponsibility to the party in spurning it! During the last few months of his active political life Lenin let the Stalin blindfold fall from his eyes, he saw Stalin as a liar, a manipulator, and a terrifying all-round menace, he began desperately urging Trotsky to form a bloc with him dedicated to bringing Stalin down. But Lenin too managed to undercut himself (as if all luck were bad, or as if the bloody farce of history were determined that Stalin succeed): in the body of his Testament addressed to the party, he called Trotsky and Stalin "the two ablest members of the Central Committee" and he expressed reservations about both which made him seem unresolved between them; it was only in his grim postscript written weeks later, after more light had been cast on Stalin's treacheries, that he demanded Stalin's dismissal as general secretary. It was Lenin's *infatuation* with Stalin ("He would often fall in love with people, in the full sense of the word," Trotsky recalled. "And on such occasions I would tease him: 'I know, I know, you are having a new romance.' Lenin realized this characteristic of his, and would laugh by way of reply, a little embarrassed but a little angry, too") that kept Stalin in a position to move in as soon as Lenin was dead and gone. It was at least in part Trotsky's disappointment, perhaps his pique, over Lenin's failure to see Stalin for what he so repellently was that prevented Trotsky from, say, accepting the vice-pre-

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miership in time to head off Stalin's cabal with Kamenev and Zinoviev. As Lunacharsky noted while Trotsky still had the second strongest voice in the government, Trotsky was incompetent as a politician (the only activity he ever undertook that he was incompetent at). Lenin's last, frantic advice to Trotsky was to avoid being taken in by one of Stalin's "rotten compromises," and sure enough soon after Lenin's death Trotsky allowed himself to be persuaded not to press for Stalin's dismissal though Stalin blandly offered his resignation then and there is no doubt that the Central Committee would have accepted it if Trotsky had argued that Lenin's Testament must be carried out. A couple of years after Lenin's death, the "iron curtain" of Stalin's tyranny had come down with a bang (the term was an invention by Bukharin, who as Stalin's quaking Cerberus was admonishing certain fainthearts to make their way back inside "before the iron curtain came down"), and "If Ilyich were alive today," Lenin's widow remarked bitterly, "he would be in one of Stalin's jails." Degree by degree, step by step, taking advantage of every slip and kindness by his opponents and every assistance by fate (such as Sverdlov's and Lenin's premature deaths), Stalin not only took charge of the corporation but, just to be on the safe side, sooner or later got round to murdering all the administrative holdovers. Trotsky was pushed out early, beyond easy range, so he lasted somewhat longer.

Toward the end of his life he was particularly anxious to organize a genuine Marxist party, a band of true believers (like the one to which he had pledged himself so many years ago, all of whose members except himself and Stalin were by now dead), but the—as he had no doubt—grotesquely misleading instance of Stalinist Russia and the terrible threat of Hitler kept the world's attention elsewhere, and the "Fourth International" never held the allegiance of more than a very small group who had already split into factions before his death. (He had never been a clever politician.) Publicly he was dauntless, fighting the good fight: "Trotsky was, perhaps, the only man in the whole world able to grasp the real depths to which the Russian Revolution had sunk," wrote his widow. "He worked on, because it was imperative that truthfulness, steadfastness, intelligibility, and Marxist integrity be seen to oppose Stalin's degradation of the socialist conscience; and because it was essential to rid revolutionary knowledge and thought of the monstrous nightmare that had descended upon them. Trotsky

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planned new books; he wrote articles for the New York *Times* almost daily for a time, worked on analyses and essays in the *Opposition Bulletin*, and brought out *Stalin's Crimes*, a work of 376 pages [it would be interesting to know how closely this book prefigured the "three volumes on Stalin's crimes" that according to Solzhenitsyn Khrushchev said he had had put together but that he never quite got up the nerve to publish]. . . ." In private, though, his spirit sometimes came near to failing. Even before he had been banished the Stalinist pollution was already beginning to seem irreversible: "Leon Davidovich, overworked and tense, continued to feel weak and feverish. . . . In the mornings, at breakfast, we [she and their two sons] would watch Leon Davidovich open the papers. He would glance at them and then throw them all over the table with disgust. They contained nothing but stupid lies, distortions of even the plainest fact or speech, hateful threats, and telegrams from all over the world, vying with each other to repeat the same infamies with boundless servility. What had they done to the Revolution, the Party, Marxism, and the International! It was impossible to remain silent." Finally, as Stalin and Hitler came to dominate the period like a matched pair of bad smells and eventually made their short-lived peace with each other (which would very soon end, as Trotsky immediately foresaw but didn't live to see, with a Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union), the inflexible Marxist in Trotsky yielded just a little to pessimism and charity and the awful prospect of an age-long hell-black night for mankind. The good society had finally come to seem farther away than he had ever before been willing to imagine.

Anti-Semitism, for example, had always seemed to him a social aberration that would be cleared up in a proletarian democracy by assimilation (though as a Jew in the land of pogroms he had experienced anti-Semitism at first hand, knew how virulent it could be, had early suggested that because he was Jewish he should stay out of a Bolshevik government to forestall anti-Semitic attacks against it, but was overruled by Lenin; he liked to tell a story from the revolutionary-train days about overhearing a Cossack soldier shouting indignantly at another Cossack, "Trotsky is *not* a Jew! He's one of *us*!"). But Trotsky the humanist and Jew was soon aware of "the anti-Semitic undertones of the Moscow trials" (though the American-Jewish press of the 'thirties, accustomed to considering the Soviet Union "our only consolation as far as anti-Semitism is con-

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cerned," disagreed, calling "unforgivable" Trotsky's "groundless charges against Stalin"; Trotsky didn't live to see the full flowering of Stalinist anti-Semitism in the "Doctors' Plot" of Stalin's last years); and by 1937, in an interview with an American-Jewish newspaper, "he admitted that recent experience with anti-Semitism in the Third Reich and even in the U.S.S.R. had caused him to give up his old hope for the 'assimilation' of the Jews with the nations among whom they lived. He had arrived at the view that even under socialism the Jewish question would require a 'territorial solution,' i.e. that the Jews would need to be settled in their own homeland." (But the inflexible Marxist had to add his two cents: "He did not believe, however, that this would be in Palestine, that Zionism would be able to solve the problem, or that it could be solved under capitalism. The longer the decaying bourgeois society survives, he argued, the more vicious and barbarous will anti-Semitism grow all over the world.")

The other issue he left ajar in spite of Marxist prescriptions was one raised by Bruno Rizzi, an Italian ex-Trotskyist, who just before the Second World War published *La Bureaucratisation du Monde*, where he presented the hypothesis of "the managerial revolution" from which James Burnham and Milovan Djilas later derived their popularized and simplified studies. Rizzi's argument, as Deutscher sums it up, was that Trotsky's defense of the Soviet Union as a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations was mistaken, that the bureaucracy did in fact for all practical purposes own the means of production and exploit the workers, that "bureaucratic collectivism"—whether under Stalin, Hitler, or Roosevelt—was a "new system of exploitation, destined to prevail the world over. As long as bureaucratic collectivism stimulated social productivity . . . it would be invulnerable. The workers could only do what they had done under early capitalism—struggle to improve their lot and wrest concessions and reforms from their new exploiters. Only after the new system had begun to decay and to retard and shackle social growth, would they be able to resume the fight for socialism successfully. This was a remote prospect, yet it was not unreal: bureaucratic collectivism was the last form of man's domination by man, so close to classless society that bureaucracy, the last exploiting class, refused to acknowledge itself as a possessing class."

Trotsky in his last major theoretical essay, "The U.S.S.R. in War," treated Rizzi's argument with respect even while countering

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it detail by detail, but toward the end of his refutation he made a (for him) unique doomsday prediction: If the Second World War "were not to lead to proletarian revolution in the West, then the place of decaying capitalism would indeed be taken not by socialism, but by a new bureaucratic and totalitarian system of exploitation. And if the working classes of the West were to seize power, but then prove incapable of holding it and surrender it to a privileged bureaucracy, as the Russian workers had done, then it would indeed be necessary to acknowledge that the hopes which Marxism placed in the proletariat had been false. In that case the rise of Stalinism in Russia would also appear in a new light":

> We would be compelled to acknowledge that [Stalinism] . . . was rooted not in the backwardness of the country and not in the imperialist environment, but in the congenital incapacity of the proletariat to become a ruling class. Then it would be necessary to establish in retrospect that . . . the present U.S.S.R. was the precursor of a new and universal system of exploitation. . . . However onerous this . . . perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of accomplishing its mission . . . nothing else would remain but to recognize openly that the socialist program, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, had petered out as a Utopia.

If all this turns out to be the case, what is the obligation for men of good will? "It is self-evident," concludes Trotsky with the last defiant breath of nineteenth-century humanism, "that a new minimum program will be required—to defend the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic system."

So Trotsky was a very busy man, but he had time all his years from the age of twenty-three for a happy marriage with a brave and loving woman. Here is his widow's account of their first meeting:

> It was during my adolescence that I became acquainted with "revolutionary ideas," ideas that, in Tsarist Russia, were often no more extreme than liberal ideas are in the West. . . . When my secondary studies were over, I wanted, like so many others, to breathe the air of a free country, and so I went to Geneva to study science, . . . but I was more interested in the problems of society. . . .
>
> In 1902, I was living in Paris. I used to take my meals in a flat in the rue Lalande, where we pooled our meager resources to save money. Julius Martov [the same!] used to come there; at the age of twenty-nine, he was already known as a founder of one of the earliest Russian social

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democratic groups and as a veteran of Turukhansk, the notorious Siberian place of exile. It was he who one day at table announced the arrival of a young fugitive from Siberia. . . . Leon Davidovich came to the rue Lalande on the same day he arrived in Paris. He was twenty-three and had just spent three years' exile in Eastern Siberia. His keen mind, his vitality, and his capacity for hard work already set him apart as a forceful and mature figure. He was not greatly impressed by Paris at the time. He used to joke that Odessa was worth a lot more. Although he had come to Paris with the main object of making contact with the Russian émigré socialist movement, it just happened that one day the two of us were standing together looking at Baudelaire's tomb in the Montparnasse Cemetery . . . and from that time on, our lives were inseparable. I had an allowance of about twenty roubles a month, say fifty francs, from my family, and Leon Davidovich earned about as much from his writing. We could only just make ends meet, but then we had Paris, the comradeship of the refugees, the constant thought of Russia and the great ideas to which we were devoting our lives. . . .

In the private diary he kept while he was in exile back in France a generation later, he permits himself to write about her (they are in their middle fifties): "Today on our walk we went up a hill. N. got tired and unexpectedly sat down, all pale, on the dry leaves (the earth is still a bit damp). Even now she still walks beautifully, without fatigue, and her gait is quite youthful, like her whole figure. But for the last few months her heart has been acting up now and then. She works too much—with passion, as in everything she undertakes, and today it showed during the steep ascent up the hill. N. sat down all of a sudden—she obviously just *could not* go any further—and smiled apologetically." And he remembers her youth:

What a pang of pity I felt for youth, *her* youth. . . . One night we ran home from the Paris Opera to the rue Gassendi, 46, *au pas gymnastique,* holding hands. It was in 1903. Our combined age was 46. . . . N. was probably the more indefatigable one. Once, while a whole crowd of us were walking somewhere in the outskirts of Paris, we came to a bridge. A steep cement pier sloped down from a great height. Two small boys had climbed on to the pier over the parapet of the bridge and were looking down on the passersby. Suddenly N. started climbing toward them up the steep smooth slope of the pier. I was petrified. I didn't think it was possible to climb up there. But she kept walking up with her graceful stride, on high heels, smiling to the boys. They waited for her with interest. We all stopped anxiously. N. went all the way up without looking at us, talked to the children, and came down the same way, without having made, as far as one could see, a single superfluous

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> effort or taken a single uncertain step. . . . It was spring, and the sun was shining as brightly as it did today when N. suddenly sat down in the grass. . . .

They had two sons. One, not political and studying engineering at the university, decided against accompanying his parents into exile. For a few years they corresponded regularly, but on family matters only (of course the letters were read by the censorship), and then the parents heard no more. The father died without definite news of the son: years later, it came out that he had been arrested and imprisoned, had refused to make any "confession," and was done away with in Gulag. The other son went with his parents and served as secretary and assistant to his father till he died "under mysterious circumstances" in a Paris hospital, probably poisoned, while Trotsky was still alive to share the grief with Natalya. (Trotsky also had two daughters by an earlier marriage. One died very young of a prolonged illness while Trotsky, because Stalin hadn't yet dared to do worse than banish him to a far corner of Siberia, might still have confronted the authorities with a request to visit her before she died; so the bureaucratic solution was to hold back the letters to Trotsky about her illness till she was safely dead. The other, having left Russia, as she thought, temporarily, for psychoanalytic treatment in Germany, deprived of her child during her treatment, unexpectedly forbidden—Stalin didn't miss a trick—to return to Russia to rejoin her husband, having tried to be helpful to her father—but "I know, I know," she cried, "that children are not wanted, that they come only as punishment for sins committed"; and she loathed herself for being "mostly stuck in psychoanalytic swinishness"—ended in Berlin three weeks before Hitler took power: "The *Horst Wessel Lied* in her ears, her own country closed to her and herself torn from her family, driven from Germany, and too sick to look for another refuge, Zina locked and barricaded herself in her room and opened the gas taps." She was thirty.)

All these family tragedies fell like buildings on the Trotskys within a few years, all their children were dead and all died far away:

> Concerning the blows that have fallen to our lot, I reminded Natasha the other day of the life of the archpriest Avvakum [a seventeenth-century "Old Believer" who would not bow to the doctrinal and

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ceremonial changes that resulted in the modern Russian Orthodox Church]. They were stumbling on together in Siberia, the rebellious priest and his faithful spouse. Their feet sank into the snow, and the poor exhausted woman kept falling into the snowdrifts. Avvakum relates: "And I came up, and she, poor soul, began to reproach me, saying: 'How long, archpriest, is this suffering to be?' And I said, 'Markovna, unto our very death.' And she, with a sigh, answered: 'So be it, Petrovich, let us be getting on our way.' "

She was in the next room when the assassin struck. "There was a terrible piercing cry . . . Leon Davidovich appeared, leaning against the door-frame. His face was covered with blood, his blue eyes glittered without his spectacles, and his arms hung limply by his sides . . . 'What has happened,' I cried, 'what has happened?' I put my arms round him in utter confusion. He answered calmly, 'Jacson,' he said, as if he had wished to tell me: 'Now it is done.' I helped him, as he slumped down on the mat on the dining-room floor. 'Natasha,' he said, 'I love you . . .' He spoke with an effort and indistinctly, as if in a dream, while I mopped the blood from his face and put ice on the wound in his head." In the ambulance his left side was already paralyzed, "his right arm kept making circles in the air." At the hospital: "A nurse started to cut his gray hair. Leon Davidovich smiled at me and whispered, 'You see, here's the barber.' We had spoken that day of sending for one." A little later "The nurses began to cut his clothes. Suddenly he said to me distinctly but very sadly and gravely, 'I don't want them to undress me . . . I want you to do it . . .' [all ellipses in the text] These were his last words to me. I undressed him, and pressed my lips to his. He returned the kiss, once, twice, and again. Then he lost consciousness." He died August 21, 1940. He was sixty years old.

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SYDNEY LEA

Reaching Over

This time will be the crossing.
This time it's not as if
he hasn't reached for a match
and touched his cigarette and—mooning—
put it back in the box still glowing.
Not as if he hasn't gone
upstairs with the jug in one hand,
the other clapping the rail,
or as if the small bomb of brimstone
has not lit the others and grown,
if only enough to reach
the fuse of shelf paper trailing
from the hooch-soaked cupboard above
like the single sad strand of a smirched
bandage to the can of Sterno perched
in waiting to sigh into flame
—blue eye in a dark recess—
or the cupboard itself doesn't glow
and reach the same faint blue in time.
He might have studied the quickening climb
through the spectrum that follows, the change
from blue to green to yellow
to orange, like the sun's at prime.
Upstairs he lies in bed between dream
and whatever life is. It's not as though
he hasn't an eye, doesn't know
the way disaster can reach
to a kind of splendor—glow
of the world in its own undoing. Below,
bottles pop like lampbulbs, fuel
the process. Not that you wouldn't
hear or smell the charring.
But each mirage overrules
the instinct to flight: each horse he's schooled

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high-jumps in a paddock, all ribbons and plaits,
a lake in Ontario lies
clear to the shining bottom
that only an otter obfuscates,
marking the slick with a razor-fine wake,
a marten glows in a tree,
an eagle patrols a shelf
as the desert explodes into light,
the guide in his gallabyeh grunts—poetry!—
and a prow cuts a full blue sea.
Not that he's wrong. At last
the drink will carry him over.
It's not that he hasn't reached
over, or fire hasn't found its path
this time. He has, it has.

At Hardscrabble: Face to the Moon

—27 August, 1979

Seven years expire, and I return.
Barely spring then, small-leafed boughs now rich
with foliage pricked the moon hung full and perfect.
Someone had slapped a barn together here
a hundred years before. It sheltered me.
Nearby, a cellar hole so finely shimmed
its Yankee must have run plain out of time
or else ambition. All is fallen.
Winters have so broken down the whole
affair I wonder if I've found the site.
Collapse has so transformed, uncentered it.

Face to the moon in the first fall night,
though it's still August. The moon has slimmed itself
down to a simple C, and histories
flit back like the last bloodsucking bugs of summer:

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My mother, velvet-jacketed in bed,
is memory more smelled than recollected
by the eye—the fragrance of her sleep,
her hair washed out a night before. An hour
till terror—first fall day of school, my father
hums downstairs in time to perking coffee,
dark aroma rising through the cracks.
At school (old inn that crashed in 'Twenty-Nine)
there is a fireplace in the lobby with a motto:
KINDLE YOUR OWN FIRE.
For me at eight years old, that stern inscription
might as well have been one Vergil showed
to Dante. Those first mornings I rehearse
whole drills of failure—balls that skitter past
my outstretched glove; a fumbled football; math;
disaster of a joke I try to tell
to two huge bullies, Czars of a higher class.
In the bus I plug my ears and clench my eyes
to blank out history and face the blankness.
For even then I know how childish dread
can falsify the vanished summer's days,
nostalgize that vacation's troubling signs:
the springhouse snapping turtle; smallmouth bass
clumped in a bucket with pondweed, cress and slime.
These mornings odors mix before they fade:
the smell of turf where a bloodhorse runs and kicks
a trail of perfumed dew; the moist-sweet cow barn;
whiff of harshest soap and spanking linen,
uniforms of Irish chambermaids,
yet soon these virgins wear their small moustaches,
sweat of labor, pearly, delicate.
The grooms put iodine on the broodmares' shanks
to toughen them with scar. The bullneck farmer
prowls the fields to shoot the hawk and crow.
In his sack a groundhog's head shows flies like stitches
round the fetid wounds. At last at dusk
the whirligig of sprinklers gathering night!

Night gathering, I meddle with the embers

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of my fire and shift to face the touring planet.

"Fly Me to the Moon . . ." A snatch of song.
I whirl her, Jeannie, all around the floor
as brassy saxophones appear to pour
a light on us. I dance like Fred Astaire,
I pray, because I'm sick almost to death
with love, and smirking in the corners stand
the older boys with car keys in their hands.
And hunkered in his wheelchair by the wall
sits crippled Jeremiah with a flask.
He swears to beat the band. Tonight I think
he hurls his gob of curses—always meant
to bring a laugh—on me more desperately.
His street tough's parody—"I'll break your leg
and beat your goddam head with it!"—now seems
more full of gall and meaning than it's been.
Tonight I dream. I struggle with my crutches.
I chase a girl who shines on the leatherette
of a fleeing Buick. Laughter spills from the car.
I don't know if I wake to worse or better.
At worst I have the girl again with me.
At the wheel, my cousin (long since dead of drink).
His girlfriend, Barbie something, clings to him
as close as air. Ahead, far in the country,
Sonny's Modern Ballroom has Les Brown,
His Band of Renown, the rum we smuggle in.
Bleary-eyed above our later ring
of vomit, we all pledge unending love.

And here again I stir my ring of ashes,
humming brave and blind to will the present
closer, though the past has its own will.
The cellar hole was built with stones as fine
as Jeannie's ribs. My Jeannie, paunchy now.
The brook was lined with trout as big as bass
that stare up stinking from a memory
of buckets turned ideal in the sternness of time,
picturesque and ghostly as the ones

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that lie among the weeds here on their own.
Winter was approaching, and the moon
was getting thin.

Now the moon approaches
the western rim. It seems to balance there.

Camping in the barn, the woman curses
her man as he measures rock and levels wall,
half-crippled with his labor. Farm beasts ramble,
seeking food, neglected by this Yankee
bending to the present. Nothing but . . .
She remembers linen, wine, soap, even Latin
learned in school: *Amo, amas, amat.*
A brick and marble fireplace, summer dances . . .
She recalls her giddy oath of steadfastness.
Her hair's a mat, her nightgown smeared with dregs
of rancid coffee. Tonight is just tonight,
though she may wish to clench her eyes
or fix herself in blankness. The fire needs wood.

I rise in odorous night against my will
to gather sticks. My project is to face
the moon, yet I keep up a flame for now.
I go for windfalls in the pastures—ruined, full
of insects' counterpoint: *This was This is*

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C. B. COX

Tiger Hill

Just before dusk in this gazebo,
neglected relic of Empire,
we glimpse over Darjeeling's tea gardens
through banks of cloud
the white tip of Kanchenjunga.

Snowy Himalayas hang in the sky
like a Chinese print.
Strolling past huts of Tibetan refugees
we talk of Wordsworth and Shelley,
all those romantic dreams provoked by mountains.

On our second honeymoon, dutiful tourists,
we book mini-bus seats
for the prescribed, pre-dawn scramble to Tiger Hill.
If there's no mist we'll see
the morning sun strike Kanchenjunga.

The Windamere (sic) hotel apes British customs.
Our bedroom stings with cold.
That night I dream I'm sleeping
with a mountain
making love through a chink in her icy wall.

I shudder awake, clutching my hot water bottle,
now lukewarm.
Across the room you sleep gently.
I check it's only three,
shiver and curse the trip to Tiger Hill.

When I wake up you're laughing at me.
We've overslept.
As I slide over to a real woman in a warm bed
there's a sudden knock, a servant
bringing what the Indians call bed tea.

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After the War

At Abbéville on the Somme
there was rubble in cobbled streets
and bullet-holes in sign-posts,
eyeing my approach.

I cycled further south,
in need of lodging for the night.
Over a brooklet, down a rutted lane,
I found a cottage set in willows,
pastoral in August heat.

The farmer fussed over me,
kept me up late
rummaging out London post-cards
where he'd served with De Gaulle.
His daughters giggled at my accent.

I slept in the family feather-bed:
he and his wife camped out below.
He had captured a symbol—
the new generation
for whom his friends had died.

The frowsty mattress held me
like a cocoon.
The sides shelved to a hollow
where I lay restless,
anxious for the dawn.

Next day as I cycled off
in a sudden shower of rain,
parents and children resembled
a Victorian family group,
waving goodbye.

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In my yellow cape
I free-wheeled through the willows,
like a butterfly,
too fragile for that farmer's hopes.

Anniversary

We drop down to Le Lavandou,
  a dazzling beach,
    a hundred topless girls.
What a present!
  for my silver wedding,
    this rich variety of breasts.
I swim out to the raft
  wondering
    and then
a sudden apparition!
  Standing on the crispy waves
    a blonde windsurfer:
her lithesome body
  holds in balance
    a tugging purple sail.

A silver wedding diminishes
  us
    marks a small future
and what price our fidelity
  beside this bright company
    pride of sense and easy love?
Yet when the Dutch boy
  puts mouth to breast,
    touches a crotch,
his girl crouched blank-eyed on the sand,

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I'm distressed,
I feel a loss
as if words fell out of language:
intimacy,
private grace.

Afternoon somnolence is broken
by a yellow bus—
a bevy of schoolgirls,
little breasts under regulation
blue swimsuits;
alert as birds
they sit cross-legged in line
while their teachers
mark out shallow water
with ropes and toggles and floats.
A shifting of straw mats
and collapse of sunshades—
the topless girls,
ill at ease,
drift away across the sand.

So our silver wedding ends
beside a school at work,
but we don't mind:
we've spent so many years
with ropes and toggles and floats
making a world safe for children.
We swim far out beyond the raft;
from the shore you might think us
a two-headed monster,
four eyes bobbing above the waves,
yet at this vantage point
we command perfect landscape.
Distant from the curving beach,
blue hills of Le Lavandou,
we are treading the deep waters.

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FRED LICHT

Shelter the Pilgrim

TO MY GRANDFATHER, who was very much a ghetto Jew, charity was one of the exigencies of life. You breathed. You ate. You gave. Steadily and without having to think about it, my grandfather went every week to visit a hospital run by the Orthodox community bringing with him cigarettes, fruit, newspapers and a bit of money.

To my parents who prided themselves on being "advanced Jews" and brought us up to think of grandfather as honorable but picturesque, charity was a duty one performed at a distance. They wrote two checks, one at Passover, the other at New Year and received, in return, a form letter of thanks from the agency that received their donation.

To me, to my brother and to my sister, charity is an equivocal institution designed to keep the poor in their place. We have read Marx and we have read Freud and we can quote chapter and verse about charity as a form of social bribery and self-delusion for the abreaction of social and personal guilt-feelings. We still write and send off checks at regular intervals, but we do so with a good deal of self-irony, as if indulging a quaint but not too harmful superstition. We clearly know that charity is patronizing and shameful and the ugly fruit of uglier injustice. But we are somewhat dissatisfied with our knowledge. We have come to be understanding of our parents and have come to venerate our grandfather and his bag full of cigarettes and oranges with which he set out every Friday after lunch. But we also suspect that we don't know what any of them was all about.

It has always been difficult to think about these things but my brother and my sister and I are convinced that it is the only thing that we ought to think about because if we could come out in the clear in this one simple matter, we could make our peace with all the rest.

*

When the affairs of my father's firm required our moving from Paris to Berlin in 1937, my mother for all her being "advanced"

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nevertheless felt that inviting the rabbi over in order to make a donation was as much part of settling into a new home as unpacking the suitcases and spreading the carpets.

The rabbi arrived thoroughly unsettled by the phenomenon of a Jewish family moving *to* Germany in those days of flight and panic. He harangued my parents on the irresponsibility of taking the family into the heart of a dangerous storm but accepted the customary check for the charities of his congregation. Mother, always anxious to win her children over to the outdoor life we despised, asked him whether there was an outing club or sports association in which she might enroll her three children. Patiently, as if speaking to a child, the rabbi explained to her that the community was in chaos and disintegration. Those who had not yet fled took every care to dissociate themselves from anything Jewish in the hope of passing unmolested. For burials, for Bar Mitzvahs and for the High Holidays, he had to hunt and cajole among the remnants of a once proud community sufficient attendance to constitute a *minyan*, the ritual quorum without which services could not take place.

My mother objected that there must be some sort of activity in which her children could contribute so that they would not feel totally disconnected from the kind of religious community which the whole family had always known.

The rabbi, a rather unprepossessing person, as I remember him, with pudgy hands and tiny, perfectly round and staring eyes, thought awhile and then nodded. There was always something to be done but he doubted that we would want to do it. The implication that we were too spoiled and too stupid to understand the situation in which we found ourselves stung us all to the quick and even before he told us what it was he had in mind, we were determined to say yes just to have the pleasure of proving him wrong.

There was, it appeared, a home for retarded orphans still being operated by the community. Most of the healthy orphans had been resettled with the help of Dutch and American and English congregations but, as was only logical, nobody wanted to take in mentally crippled children. There had been fairly generous contributions to keep the institute in Berlin running smoothly, but there was no getting around the fact that they were being abandoned. Among these children there were quite a few who weren't absolutely hopeless. They could dress themselves and do some rudimentary reading and writing. The aunts and cousins who had placed

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them in the institution had, for the most part, emigrated, and the children were growing more and more despondent as their former contacts with the outside world dwindled to nothing. The nurses hardly dared take them out for walks anymore because there had been violent incidents. Now that Sunday visits to distant relatives had stopped, these children were limited to their dormitory and to the narrow asphalt yard in which they played. For the utterly benighted children, it didn't matter, of course, but for the others . . . In short, would we consider inviting one of these children to our house for weekend visits so that he could have a bit of family life and affection and normal childhood play? It would make an enormous difference.

We children were aghast at the notion and with the healthy brutality of childhood hoped fervently that mother, who usually objected to our bringing school-friends home because they upset her tidy householder's routine, would refuse. We felt absolutely betrayed when, without so much as glancing in our direction, she said that she would be delighted to receive one of these children for weekends. Two days later the rabbi phoned to tell her that the boy he had selected was called Ernst, that he was fourteen years old, my age, of impeccable cleanliness and that even though he had the mind of a six-year-old he would amaze us all by a curious gift he had of doing the most astonishingly complicated mathematical and algebraic problems in his head within seconds.

We children had decided beforehand that the one closest in age to the impending guest would bear the brunt of the visit while the others would help out now and then. Ernst, therefore, fell to my lot and since I didn't have much faith in my sister's and brother's loyalty in this matter, I didn't look forward to Friday. The mathematical quirk of our imbecile guest was a personal offense. Arithmetic was my weakest subject, and I toiled over my homework in daily bitterness and frustration while my teacher kept repeating that if only I could understand the mathematical discipline of mind all the rest would come by itself. To have an idiot crassly expose my weakness enraged me and I went into a wild tantrum when my mother told me on Friday that I was to fetch Ernst from his institution after school. Parental orders went unquestioned in our fairly authoritarian household. But at this I balked. I would go accompanied by my older sister and by my younger brother or I simply would not go. My mother found the scene I made unreasonable

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but felt, on the whole, that my request, though silly, was acceptable. At school's end, therefore, I found Edith and Jonathan waiting for me looking sulky and keeping a glacial silence. It was a drizzly day toward the end of September and the orphanage in Moabit was accessible from our school only by a complicated trip which required changing from the underground to a bus and then to yet another bus. I tried to make up for the discomfort that I had imposed on them by offering to buy hot chocolate at the corner Conditorei. Jonathan who was always straightforward refused outright. Edith, who was sneaky, accepted the bribe; but after she had greedily finished her hot chocolate, she still refused to speak to me.

It wasn't till we were on the last bus, driving through Moabit that we drew together again. Moabit is an immense and squalid slum utterly without color or the kind of devil-may-care arrogance that makes the slums of Latin countries less dispiriting. None of us had ever seen such wretchedness before. We were too young to put it into words but involuntarily and silently we put by our squabble and stood abashed at its triviality. We had suddenly come up against the extent of our good fortune which had spoiled us and which we took for granted.

The institution, when we finally found it after losing the way several times in the mirror-maze of block after block of uniformity and wretchedness, turned out to be a low barracks, sooty and forlorn. The roof had been mended here and there with tarpaper and wooden laths; the brick wall which ran clear around it bore patches of torn advertisements and was topped by a grim run of broken glass. We were not allowed inside but had to wait in the porter's lodge which was foul with rancid smells and the fumes of a pot-bellied stove. The porter stared at us with unconcealed hatred while we shifted from one foot to the other, avoided each others' eyes and felt by turns vaguely guilt-stricken and aggressively arrogant. The door opened and an elderly lady in a white smock entered resolutely holding on to a recalcitrant boy with a sullen and peevish look on his round and somewhat beefy face. He was taller than I and bigger, but in a bloated, unhealthy way. It occurred to me that if it should come to a fight, I would win without any great effort.

Meanwhile, with the kind of mechanical cheerfulness that scorns to hide its artificiality, the woman in the white smock was making the introductions.

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"Don't they look nice, your new friends? You must be Edith, of course, and which one of you young men is Jonathan and who is Henry? Oh good! Now off with the lot of you before it gets dark. And remember—be back on Sunday not later than six. Come on now, Ernst," she cajoled in the same artificially patient tone. "Come on, there's no reason to be shy! You'll have a marvellous time."

But Ernst seemed unwilling to budge. I was in an ecstasy of embarrassment and paralyzed with a surge of compassion such as I had never felt before. Jonathan, by my side, was also stricken; of that I felt sure without even looking up. Strangely it was Edith who saved the situation. As long as Ernst remained a weekend guest in our house, I never failed to be amazed at Edith's quick and effective sympathy for him coupled with absolutely cool detachment. Like an efficient but somewhat distraught mother helping her little daughter with her knitting, Edith would step in whenever Ernst and I reached an impasse, set things straight and hand him back to me while she went quickly on her way. Now, rudely and nonchalantly ignoring the nurse she broke in with one of those algebraic problems that always made me go clammy and weak inside.

"Ernst, if one car starting out here travels at fifty kilometers an hour and another car starts from the same point seven hours later but travels at sixty kilometers an hour, when will the second car overtake the first car?"

"After three hours and ten minutes," Ernst said just as you or I might say "good morning" without the slightest hesitation and without a trace of triumph. Though he towered over her, he took Edith's hand as children do at streetcrossings and without a backward glance turned to leave the porter's lodge. Jonathan and I followed, perplexed beyond the ability to think over what had happened.

Outside, Edith resolutely put Ernst's hand in mine.

"You're going to be Henry's friend from now on," she said.

Ernst looked at her, impassive and stolid, and then looked at me. Unable to fathom what went on in Ernst's round head, I simply stared back, not daring to venture so much as a smile. Then he nodded. His hand which had lain in mine like a passive object closed around mine with a firm grip and he nodded again. Edith, Jonathan and I were seized by the same panic. If we let one minute

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go by, we would never find the way back to where we belonged. Like children under a spell we would be doomed to wander about in these gray and rank streets forever. Breaking into a run and dragging a puzzled Ernst with us, we made for the bus stop and did not relax till the familiar lights of the Westend gathered about us once again.

At home we were surprised when mother gave Ernst a very summary and hasty reception. Jonathan and Edith disappeared under spurious pretexts, leaving me to show Ernst my room which he was to share with me. I expected him to be pleased. It was a large and comfortable room filled with the oddments that I had collected over the years: a small mineral collection begun and then abandoned; stamps which I had kept at with slightly greater constancy; all sorts of sports-gear; a Tahitian xylophone; books ranging from the Iliad to cowboy tales; a modest collection of records; and a hand-cranked Victrola. Not knowing quite what to do, I put on a record. But Ernst didn't respond one way or the other. He sat in an uncomfortable armchair by the side of his bed and stared at me, patient but obviously expectant, quite oblivious of the Victrola.

"Would you like to play a game?" I asked, wondering secretly what sort of games one could possibly play with Ernst.

His expression didn't change and for an instant I thought he was deaf. Finally, unable to support his steadfast stare any longer, I got out a piece of paper and tried tic-tac-toe. He didn't know the game and I tried to explain it to him. It is difficult to explain very simple matters when one is fourteen, and I was clumsy and self-conscious as I went about the business of x's and o's and how one had to try to line them up. Ernst followed me very seriously and we tried our hand at the game for a few turns. But just as I finally thought that he understood the game he unaccountably lost interest. Again he looked at me expectantly. It was many weeks before I realized that his stare was really blank and not at all expectant. He was quite content to sit and watch me even if I did nothing more interesting than read a book. Once I discovered this quirk things got easier for me, but at that moment I was near the end of my tether.

With the piece of paper between us and a pencil at hand, I decided to try another game: the one in which each participant draws part of an image, folding the paper in such a way as to hide everything but the bottom lines before handing the paper over to

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the next player. The point of the game is the incongruous, fantastic picture that appears when the paper is unfolded. I remember being fascinated by the game when I was in Kindergarten and thought it would do beautifully for Ernst. He seemed to understand my instructions quite easily this time and turned out to be a very meticulous, painstaking draughtsman. I was delighted to have hit on something that made time pass so agreeably.

"All right now," I said when we had reached the bottom of the page and it was time to unfold the paper, "Let's see what sort of monster we have got here."

Of its sort, the picture was a tremendous success. My sloppy sketches contrasted vividly with Ernst's precise and sober rendering of faces, bodies and landscape. He looked at the page for a long time and seemed to grow perplexed at first and downright angry afterwards.

"Don't you think it's funny?"

He shook his head stubbornly and handed the page back to me visibly agitated, as if he had been tricked in some way and could see no justification for the deception that had been practiced on him. But by then it was time to go into the living room where Edith and mother lighted the Sabbath candles. Ernst was very proud of being given a cap to wear while the prayers were said but didn't seem to have any interest at all in the little ceremony. He kept fingering his hat and later asked whether he could keep it on during dinner.

"Just like in a synagogue," he kept repeating cheerfully.

"Do you often go to synagogue?" mother asked and Ernst nodded and laughed.

"I like going to synagogue." Abruptly he started to mutter a few prayers in Hebrew which he had contrived to learn by heart. But when we complimented him on knowing them so well, he was surprised and started to stare again.

At dinner he behaved better than we could have foreseen. He was clumsy with the silver, holding knife and fork at the very base of the handle and he sometimes lost track of how much he had in his mouth and stuffed himself, but there was a great attention to detail that bore out the rabbi's prediction that he was very tidy and clean. Once when he broke his roll, a few crumbs scattered on the floor and he simply couldn't go on eating without first getting up from his chair and squatting on the floor till he had picked up

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every tiniest speck. He particularly loved apples and had a way of peeling them in a continuous spiral which pleased him immensely. Father asked him whether he would mind peeling an apple for each one of us and Ernst beamed with gratification. It took almost half an hour before we each had an apple, but because of father's inspiration, we all got up from the table feeling that dinner had been a great success.

Going to bed was what I dreaded most. I hadn't had a chance to get used to my manhood yet and all the family teased me about being exaggeratedly shy. It was excruciating for me to be seen in my pajamas or my underwear, and now I would have to undress with an utter stranger in my room. For his part, Ernst had no qualms at all. With the careful, studied tidiness that marked all his gestures, he slowly got undressed while I sat on the edge of my bed wondering where I could hide and envying Ernst for his nonchalance. As in a trance I watched him take off his sweater, then his shirt, his trousers and his socks. His skin was very white and fine, rather like a baby's; and when he finally stood naked by the side of his bed, I saw that there wasn't the vaguest sign of that change which bedevilled most of my waking and almost all my sleeping hours. The sight of Ernst grown to the full height of a man but childish in every other way overwhelmed me with a sudden, shameful but irrepressible wave of physical disgust. I couldn't get myself to undress in front of him. Mumbling some stupid words meant for an excuse, I grabbed my pajamas, my robe and disappeared into the bathroom.

Returning, I found that Ernst had already turned out the light in my room. I was used to reading in bed before falling asleep; but out of a sense of hospitality I didn't want to turn the light on again even though I could tell from his breathing that Ernst was still awake. I lay in the dark wondering how I was going to live through the rest of the weekend when suddenly his voice broke in on me. He sounded strangely shy and hesitant and like a child that wants something but doesn't know what he wants or how to go about getting it.

"Henry? Please ask me a question, Henry."

"All right. Here's a question: what do you want to do tomorrow?" I spoke more brusquely than I had intended. There was a silence. Then:

"Not that kind of a question," Ernst said timidly and obviously

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close to tears. "*My* kind of a question." He was almost whispering now. As so often in my encounters with Ernst I felt deeply ashamed and consequently vengeful.

"What's your kind of question?"

"You know—my kind of question. The kind I'm good at."

"All right. But I'm not good at asking them."

"When were you born?"

"On February 12th, 1922."

"Now ask me what day of the week it was."

"All right, Ernst—what day of the week was it?"

"A Saturday. And now ask me what day of the week it will be in the year two thousand and twelve."

"Why don't you just tell me," I said, exasperated.

"Ask me. Please!"

"On what day of the week will my birthday fall in the year two thousand and twelve?"

"Wednesday," he sighed happily. "Thank you Henry. Thank you for asking me."

Saturday passed easily enough. Ernst liked to stay in bed in the morning, and I sneaked from my room, dressed, had breakfast and sought refuge with Jonathan. It was eleven before Ernst finally got up and since it took him a long time to take his bath and get dressed, the morning was gone without my having to do anything at all. Lunch passed off easily, too. We were all a bit apprehensive about whether Ernst would want to peel apples for all of us but he seemed to have forgotten his triumph of the previous evening. Jonathan promised to take care of Ernst till three when I was to take him to the movies. I had looked forward to having an hour off but when I entered my room alone, I found that I wasn't really in the mood for anything much and just moved about restlessly till it was time to go.

Ernst didn't have any preference where movies were concerned and followed me with great docility to a film about car racing. On subsequent visits our Saturday afternoon at the movies was repeated religiously. In time, I took him to every conceivable kind of film but could never quite make out which sort of movie he liked best. Now and then, especially during sequences that played on a ship or at the beach, he would talk to himself saying how pretty it was but he never seemed to disapprove of anything. Murder mys-

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teries which frightened me to death and love scenes which I thought contemptible went past him without eliciting visible signs of displeasure. And, strangely enough, he always managed to understand the plot when we talked about the movie on the way home even though he could never follow the thread when I tried to tell him of some incident that had happened to me or some story a friend had related to me. Maybe the acting out of the story made it easier for him to grasp the situation while episodes that consisted only of words confused him. I don't know about such things.

If Saturday had been a success, Sunday was a despondent failure. We let him sleep again as long as he wanted to but when he did get up, he was nervous and hurried and got everything wrong and I had to make him undress again and turn his clothes right side out. At lunch he choked on his food; and after the meal, it was obvious that he was already thinking of having to go back to his institution. He just sat there, fidgeting, unable to do anything, just waiting to get it over with. On the bus he hardly spoke a word and kept looking out of the window. He was breathing hard, the window fogged up and he wiped the pane with his hand getting himself all smudgy.

"Why don't you stop wiping the window?" I suddenly said irritably.

He folded his hands in his lap, looking at them with distaste but obviously imposing his best behavior on himself in order to please me. At the porter's lodge, I tried to shake hands with him but he refused because his hands were so dirty.

"I'll be here on Friday again."

"I don't think you will come."

"Yes I will. Of course I will. Why do you say that I won't?"

He was silent, looked down and then turned from me and went through the yard to the barracks at the far end.

After such a gloomy farewell, I expected him to be cheerfully surprised when I came to fetch him on the following Friday. But it was as if he had forgotten all about me in the intervening time, and it was several hours before we were on familiar terms again. The third week he expected me and even though I always resented the duty my parents had imposed on me, I grew used to it. In a way I managed to get a certain amount of prestige out of the situation vis-à-vis my school-friends. It got around that I played nurse-

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maid to Ernst on weekends and gradually some of my more inquisitive friends asked to see him. On these occasions I would sometimes be extra kind to him to impress my friends with my philanthropic tendencies. Just as inexplicably I would sometimes show off before my school friends by being deliberately cruel to Ernst to show my comrades that I had trained him to loyalty as one might train a dog. And either way, Ernst was happy. He clearly regarded these friends who came and went as ephemeral creatures of no account while he was part of the family.

"I'm staying here," he would irrelevantly and abruptly tell these friends at odd moments of the afternoon. "And you have to go home."

He quite willingly put up with my willfulness as if realizing that both my exaggerated kindness and my equally artificial brutality to him were put on only for my friends and had no meaning as far as he was concerned. Once I pushed him so far that we came to blows. My impression that he represented no physical threat to me proved to be quite mistaken. When we began to fight, he was caught off guard. He hadn't noticed my mounting irritation when he remained goodnatured and oblivious to the taunts which I flung at him to show my friend that I was like a ring master with a beast. Taken by surprise, he fought back with far more energy than I expected, and he easily could have got the better of me. But suddenly he stopped fighting and went limp. Looking at me and at my friend he laughed an odd laugh that was cut short in his throat. I managed to free myself and pushed him away so that he staggered against the wall. My friend, awkwardly ashamed for me and of the spectacle I had put on for his entertainment, said he had to go home.

In November my class went on a school trip and to my surprise and also to my disappointment, Ernst gave no sign of sadness when I told him that I would not be back to fetch him next weekend. In December the whole family was to go to the mountains for a skiing vacation and mother decided that we would celebrate Channukah a little early so that Ernst would be able to be with us for the festivities and for the presents. Edith had knitted him socks. I gave him a little box with minerals that glowed in the dark, Jonathan got him some sweets of which he was especially fond and my parents bought him a handsome winter coat. Ernst was beside himself with

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joy. He was allowed to light the candles and even though you're only supposed to light two candles on the first day of Channukah, he asked to be allowed to light all eight and stood over the Menorah in beatific enchantment torn between looking at the presents and the glow of the chased silver candle-holder.

He had never been demonstrative of his affections. Probably hugging and kissing is something that has to be learned in the cradle and being an orphan, Ernst had never learned it. Now, not knowing how to find release for all the pent-up happiness, he ran from me to mother, from mother to Edith and back to me and to Jonathan. He stood in front of us, tense and tremulous not knowing what to say or do, and when one of us asked him whether he was happy he went visibly rigid with the effort of trying to tell us just how happy he was. It was Edith who again saved the situation by kissing him soundly on both cheeks. Ernst gave a deep sigh after that and went off to sit in a corner with his presents. The minerals he took to bed with him that night and there was a soft, steady glow by his bedside when we turned out the lights. In January, when I fetched him home on our first Friday back in Berlin, he seemed to have forgotten Channukah altogether—or at least he didn't talk about it. We picked up our routine again, with Saturday movies and a walk to a good pastry shop on the Oliva Platz after supper for sweets gluttonously stuffed with whipped cream. He became so much a member of the household that we no longer made special efforts to amuse him. Often I would go out on Saturday mornings with friends and leave him at home all by himself. He didn't mind in the least but played with my things or else went into the kitchen to help peel potatoes for the pommes-frites he adored and always got at lunch time.

That every farewell brings with it a premonition of death, of the ultimate farewell, is known to all. Even children have sufficient experience of that numb, wordless sensation of grief that comes with goodbyes, a grief that is diluted but never quite dissipated by time and that surges to the surface ever more strongly each time a new turning in our lives tears us from old customs and friendships.

But I believe that there is something more important involved than the mere premonition of death. I believe that there is in our goodbyes also a prophecy of the manner and the worthiness of our dying. Are we able to part with friends and with life with conscious

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dignity or with a hasty nervousness, anxious to get it over with? When we come to partings, are we baffled and confused or can we look steadfastly at what we can't understand and accept it nevertheless? We inevitably show color at such moments and what really frightens us is the foreknowledge that we will do no better when the final parting comes. Such moments mark us for life.

I don't precisely know when my parents decided that their moving to Berlin in such times and under such circumstances had been an unjustifiable mistake. Or else—my parents have always avoided the subject—they had come to Berlin with a specific purpose in mind and having achieved it, they naturally decided to go home to Paris again. In any case, we children were told late in April. The school year came to an end in mid-June and shortly after that we would leave. There remained the business of Ernst.

Mother was of the opinion that it would be best not to tell him anything. What was the use of burdening him and spoiling the weekends that remained? For all we knew, his mind was incapable of taking in recurring events. He might miss me for a few minutes when one fine Friday I didn't show up in the porter's lodge to take him home with me but his sense of time was confused in any case. He might not even realize that it was Friday. Father and Edith were against such a plan. Secretly I agreed with them although mother's idea suited me better for I recoiled at the very idea of having to tell Ernst that we were leaving for good. We finally arrived at a compromise. Father was to call the doctor who ran the institution (nominally at least: I don't believe he ever looked in more than fifteen minutes once or twice a week) to put the case before him. The doctor decided that we must tell him and that it would be best to tell him a little bit ahead of time so that he would have a chance to get used to the idea. I know nothing of the clinical side of Ernst's case and cannot tell whether the doctor's advice was sound. But in mid-May, just after Sunday lunch, when Ernst and I were about to get ready for going back to the orphanage, I steeled myself and took the leap.

"Ernst, I have to tell you something that makes me sad and I'm afraid that it might make you sad, too. But pretty soon, all of us, Edith and Jonathan and I and my parents will be leaving to go to Paris."

He looked blank, with his head tilted a little to one side, an attitude he sometimes took when he feared being scolded.

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"Paris is very far away. Look, let me show you."

I took out my atlas and showed him where Berlin was and where Paris was and how far it was from one city to the other. But I got tangled in trying to explain the map scale to him and that a tiny millimeter on the map was much, much longer than the trip from the orphanage to our home. I suddenly had the feeling that he could understand if he wanted to—we had managed to get more difficult concepts through to him—but that he simply didn't want to understand what I was saying. I grew curt and told him that sometime in June we would go away and that was that. I gave him his jacket and put my jacket on and headed for the front door.

Outside, of course, I repented having been so short and took his arm as we went off to the bus station.

"You see, we have to go to Paris. That's where all our family is. My grandfather and my cousins and aunts. They all live there and we have to go live with them."

He nodded.

"But we won't leave right away. We'll see each other plenty of times before we leave."

He nodded again but I could tell that he had fallen into that obstinate silence that was his only weapon against a treacherous world. Those silences were uncanny; you felt that he would endure martyrdom rather than make a sound.

On the Friday after that, I had some business to attend to at home before going off to the orphanage for Ernst. The weather had turned warm, sultry almost, but strong gusts of moist wind blew through the streets and grey clouds, bloated with rain, hung heavy and low above the roofs. By the time I got to the orphanage it was getting dark, but I had telephoned ahead to say that I would be late and didn't feel that I need hurry. At the porter's lodge, I sent word, as usual, for Ernst to come and meet me. Even though I am inquisitive by nature, I had never entered the institution though I had been asked to do so quite often by the nurse who accompanied Ernst to the lodge every time that I called.

I was prepared to wait, as usual, for Ernst. He was slow about getting himself together to go out. But within minutes of my arrival, the woman in the white smock crossed the courtyard alone.

"Maybe he doesn't feel well . . . I don't know what it is, but he doesn't want to come today."

"If he is sick you could have told me when I telephoned."

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"Well, I didn't know at the time. But he went to bed. I think he must feel sick. The doctor comes tomorrow in any case. We'll see what he says."

"Does he have a fever?"

"No. I took his temperature first thing. That's why I think we can wait till the doctor comes tomorrow. If you'll call around eleven . . ."

Instinct—or is that just a better word for cowardice?—told me to let it go at that. But I rallied and asked her whether I might come in and see him for a while.

"Of course. Please. I am sure your visit will do Ernst good."

She led me through the asphalted court into a long corridor bleak with peeling paint. Ernst shared a room with four other boys and two of them were in the room with him when I entered. They were mongoloids and grinned at me ingratiatingly, their heads swaying back and forth. The nurse trooped them out but they went unwillingly.

Only one bulb lighted the room from the center of the ceiling. Through the tall windows the evening looked dark and inhospitable, the color of a dark bruise.

"Ernst? What's the matter? Don't you feel well?" I suddenly cursed myself. The artificiality of my tone made everything inside me shrink with a pang of shame. Why had I come?

"I don't know," Ernst said. His voice was surprisingly even. "Turn the light off please."

The room was dark now and I took a chair near his bed. Having started, I vaguely felt that I must go on. I don't know why. But I suppose we all want things to be orderly and tidy. When life frays and threatens to be inconclusive we try out of sheer selfishness to mend things that can't be mended.

"Won't you come home with me? Edith has a surprise for you."

He got up—I could hardly see him, it was so dark—and rummaged under his bedstead for a bit. Then he got back under the covers. In his hands he held the fluorescent minerals I had given him and they shed a soft glow. He didn't cry. My throat tightened with tears and I was sure that from one moment to the next Ernst too would begin to weep. But he didn't. Maybe he felt too sad for the kind of easy tears that were swelling behind my eyes or maybe he didn't feel anything at all.

We sat in silence for a long time. Then suddenly as if inspired he

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clambered out of his bed again, cumbersomely impeded by the minerals he held aloft. Gingerly and with great affection, he placed the glowing rocks and pebbles on the floor before me and looked up at me invitingly as if he expected me to take part in some ritual that would make everything all right. He had some important idea in the back of his mind connected with the radiant stones I had given him. I racked my brain, seized by a sudden panic because I felt quite clearly that I, too, knew what the ritual was—but this knowledge lay just beyond the reach of memory. For a frantic, paralyzing moment I knew how narrow are the limits of the human mind.

Like an animal I was hard up against the electrified wire that circled my little field. I could either break through the imposed limit by risking the shock or I could retreat. For an instant I thought that I might evade the issue yet by deflecting Ernst's grave and expectant stare by throwing him another algebraic puzzle. But no algebraic problem rose to the surface of my mind. It was for me to find what x was worth—I had been given all the data that the equation demanded. With a little effort I could capture the unknown quantity.

Ernst continued to look at me as if what he expected me to do was the most natural thing in the world. The diffuse, tender glow of the mysterious little stones was matched only by the steadfastness of his inviting smile. Then, slowly only the light of the minerals remained hanging between us as the light of his face subsided under ashen disappointment.

He climbed back into bed then, leaving the little heap of minerals at my feet. Turning on his side he looked unblinkingly at me with every meaning, intent or feeling totally extinguished from his eyes.

I stayed a few minutes and then cleared my throat to say goodbye as normally as I could. But my voice didn't quite obey me and the words were left hanging more as if they were a question, a question apprehensive of inducing silence. Then I swiftly left the room, crossed the courtyard at a run and caught the bus two blocks down the street. I met all my mother's efforts to make another try the next day and then again the next week with a steadfast refusal. Adolescent brutality? Fear of hurting Ernst some more? Cowardice? Good sense? It's too long ago for me to tell. But I suppose that it was a bit of each.

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We returned to Paris and resumed the life that had been so unpleasantly interrupted. We were still there in 1940 when Paris fell. Six months later—I was nineteen then—my father managed, by means I'll never know, to arrange a complicated plan first to get us out of Paris, then to obtain false papers for us in Marseilles, and finally to bring us across the Pyrenees to the relative safety of Spain.

At first my father insisted that grandfather come with us. But the old man refused. He insisted that he would only be a hindrance and he produced any number of talmudic quotations that spoke of the necessity of preserving young life even if it is at the cost of the old. Besides, he wanted to be buried by the side of his wife and nothing would stir him from his decision. Late in January we were to leave Paris by a night train. In the evening of our flight mother made a light supper which we carried in bowls to grandfather's house. We sat about in silence after dinner till it was time to go. Then, with tranquil deliberation and with unanswerable assurance, grandfather blessed us one after the other, putting his hands on our heads and speaking a steady prayer over each of us.

During the past two or three years I had grown temperamentally and intellectually into anti-religious attitudes. But even I felt incontrovertibly that this man had the power to bless. I felt at peace but I also felt frightened at losing some small detail because I wanted to remember everything about that moment. It would have to last me to my dying day. Never again would I meet a man who could take the full force of benediction onto himself.

Having given us his blessing, grandfather stepped back from where we were standing and dismissed us with a nod. It was he who was voluntarily going from us even though to others it might look as if we were abandoning him in our flight.

Then we slipped away and found . . . well, safety. Survival. Call it what you will.

As for Ernst and grandfather, details hardly matter. They died and they died alone. But to the end each had retained the power to relinquish what had been his, to say farewell on his own terms. I, on the other hand, have still not learned to say goodbye—nor has anyone else I know. My brother, my sister, and I, left pondering the quick and cheerful way Ernst had with his algebraic equations, are resigned to the fact that the puzzle we shall face during our last moments will be the very one we've never been able to solve.

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ROBERT McDOWELL

Poppies

for Dana Gerhardt and Steve Hagel, and for Patti

I can't find a book to help me out of where I am.
I remember the day we drove out to the fields,
Or rather the day I drove out with our friends.
You had to work, but you were with us just the same.
It was still an age of pet names and horizons.
I had been reading *The Mysterious Stranger* by Mark Twain
And I climbed each hill hoping to meet him.
Nothing could have been more strange—
The California desert adazzle with poppies.

Drinking beer we thought of lions, tin, and straw.
We felt a little ashamed for thinking of them
For we were not in school any longer.
We were fond of reminding ourselves of what was real,
Then we'd run like hell for a movie or a book.
We didn't fight it when on a nearby hill we saw
A girl like you dancing in her ruby slippers.
Late in the day we split up and I climbed
Until voices called me back. Running

I was Alice pursuing the white rabbit.
When I put my foot in a hole and tumbled down
I was Jack with an empty pail of water.
Waiting for the pain to let up I imagined
"Around the World in 80 Days,"
My ankle soaring as crowds cheered.
Oh yes there were moments of delight,
Stories I felt a sure part of,
Days in which you and I were perfect.

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JANE MAYHALL

On Burnett Avenue

On Burnett Avenue in poor Kentucky where I lived
as a child, the declivity in our sidewalk never
got fixed. Nobody complained, not that anybody
forgot about it, but repairs or improvements seemed
without a function. Tall maple trees arose above
the pavements, and familiar bricks supporting gutters
invented moss gardens and little chirps of grass
that children could dip bare feet in on hot days.
There was a sweet deterioration that took over all
our land, against the suave contractors and their
villainous alterations. In snow, the pot-holes
held crystal; and in summer rains the water accumu-
lated, reflecting change, cloudy skies and branches
of sun, and gave differences to the otherwise not very
gorgeous terrain. Life was enjoyed, slightly crazy,
insolvent, and we didn't imagine it ever would be tamed.

For Elizabeth Who Telephoned to Say She'd Washed Her Windows and Now Can See New Jersey's Coral Shores

I can just see it, the gray moons of New York
grit vanishing, and the February magic swimming
up to your windows, entering the crannies, fibers
of the chair with a rose light invented by Marianne
Moore, or a George Herbert afternoon. Clean sheep
in a pasture-travel, the ice heaps coming down
the river, and sending off their pink enduring
mirrors, lighting up your room. And yourself
standing, looking out like a blue-eyed princess
in a tower, the old telephone building now entitled

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Westbeth. And your pleasure with the sky
and the cold enchanting currents, rose-flecked
against the heaps and slabs of the frozen wastes
that charm in softened colors. Your windows are
fine and brilliant, diamonds to attract the sun.

ROBERT SCHULTZ

The Light on the Wall

An oval of light
Shatters and recollects,
Pulsing there on the kitchen wall.

Just outside, the sunlight wrecks
In icicles, lights the inverted wicks
That drip their brilliance

Into this room. But what is that light
On the kitchen wall,
Slight and kicking?

Coffee steams
Between my elbows. Delicate
Jets of convection stream

From rim to rim of the cup.
What does that light remind me of?
Bright on a slide, the daphnia kicked

From edge to edge, transparent
So I could count the beats
Of its magnified heart.

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My own heart jumps hard.
Coffee beats in its cup, throwing
The sun that cuts

Through icicles, showering sparks.
The kitchen, kindled, rages with light.
Oranges blare in a bright steel bowl.

My heart knocks hard.
Coffee tosses its cupful of light—
The strokes of my working heart!

DOROTHY ROBERTS

The Sun

Coming down the stairs meeting sun-patches
hitherto somewhere else the day advances—
to go back to when they were just so is a whole year's expanse
and ignores the clock on the shelf

The day glows solid beyond the walls and patches
the carpets and the floor boards in reminiscence
of last year's equivalent season
dated only on an earlier calendar

The day shifts onward its ritual hours
welcoming the sun in a sequence of windows
like a ghost story being planted the whole circumstance—
time as we capture it whatever happens in the meters

We are asking what is transformed
by this structure the problem remains
and if bevelled the older mirrors
send out a decoration of rainbows.

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Women and Light

Women of Vermeer have fulfillment
only in what he says of them benign
sun secluding their work from the forces of destruction
benign sun outlining what has to be done
and the whole tapestry of brick, cloth, skin

He gives them work that is never done
gold weighing and lace to make and milk to pour
and scrub and rub and the calm light pours
time away over their intent forms
Brush strokes are absorbed
into the surfaces by the consistent splendor.

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VICTOR BROMBERT

Hugo's *William Shakespeare*: The Promontory and the Infinite

DURING HIS EXILE on the English Channel island of Guernsey, Victor Hugo noticed, atop a promontory, a column commemorating a general by the name of Doyle. The promontory and the column struck him as symbolic. England honored an obscure man of war, instead of its national poet. Where indeed was the column for Shakespeare?

General Doyle's column looms in Hugo's most celebratory text, *William Shakespeare.* He had agreed to write a preface for his son's translation of the complete works of the poet. But the "preface" grew so exceedingly in size and scope, it became such a dithyramb in honor of genius (his own included), that Hugo published it separately, in 1864, the year of the three hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth.

The text reaches indeed far beyond its original purpose, far beyond a discussion of Shakespeare's art. Shakespeare became a pretext for dealing with what Hugo himself defines as the "mission of art." This is not to deny that these heady pages provide striking observations on Shakespeare's fantasy, thematic coherence, power of vision. Mighty contrasts and parallels are established between the works of Shakespeare and Aeschylus: Hugo is an "intertextual" critic *avant la lettre.* But the chief concern of *William Shakespeare* is not with a single literary achievement or even a single genre. Hugo's broader ambition in having the "poet of France" (his own words!) face the "poet of England" was to provide the definitive manifesto of nineteenth-century literature—an overwhelming assessment of the responsibility of the writer, as well as of the nature and function of genius. The oceanic exile, as he approached his mid-sixties, meant to confront the *hommes océans,* the unfathomable, inexhaustible creative spirits of all time. The confrontation was of course also to be an exercise in self-assessment.

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The image of the promontory sets up the opposition of warrior and poet. That Hugo's own father had been a general only invests column and promontory with added significance. *William Shakespeare* proclaims the demise of the warrior-hero, the entrance of the real giants on the scene of action, the victory of the pen over the sword—in a sense the victory of the son over the father. In the final section, the men of violence, whose names fill history books, are seen in eclipse; the human butchers, who have for so long usurped the rightful place of the thinkers, are fated to vanish in the general twilight of the traditional hero. There may be some nostalgia for the glorious old exploits. But the death warrant of the warrior has been signed.

The fading away of the traditional epic virtues is seen, however, not as an end, but a beginning. It signals the emergence of a new symbolic epic. In his self-chosen political exile, Hugo develops a revolutionary ideology all his own. The saga and aspirations of the French Revolution are read into the lines of a new providential text that sings the adventure of the human spirit and the prowess of the creative mind. Not only does genius take precedence over the hero, but the inkstand (*écritoire*) is destined to become the emblem of the era of ideology. "The supreme epic is being enacted," announces Hugo as he glorifies the *écritoire* and specifically relates the civilizing mission of the nineteenth century to the institution of literature. "Thought is power," he declares in a spirit quite unlike that of Foucault who, a century later, equated *savoir* and *pouvoir* in order to denounce traditional humanism. The power of Hugo's new "conquerors," of the poet-prophets who will crush the heroes, serves spiritual values. But these values, contrary to first assumptions, are not easily compatible with a historical notion of progress.

A curious anachronism, affecting Hugo's utopian vision, sets up indeed a basic contradiction. For the dynasty of men of genius, whose recognized superiority means the advent of a new era, remains totally unaffected by the notion of progress. Shakespeare is not inferior or superior to Aeschylus, Dante is not inferior or superior to Homer. The dynasty is made up of minds responsible, as it were, for their own origin and originality. "Supreme art" integrates the artist in the "region of Equals." There is no primacy among masterpieces, no hierarchy to be established between genius and genius. Each superior artist takes his place in a timeless collegium, participates in what Hugo calls the "*famille dans l'infini.*"

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Needless to say, this glorification of a communion in the absolute of art is altogether different from Baudelaire's or Flaubert's idealization of the free-masonry of artists which Sartre diagnosed as an escape into the realm of the posthumous. But there is no doubt that Hugo also stresses, though in a far more complex manner, the artist's ontological presence-in-death, hinting at the implicit desire to see himself, while still alive, as posthumously communing with an atemporal elite. "To be dead is to be all-powerful," he writes in the chapter entitled "After Death." The cryptic statement is clarified a few paragraphs later: "The poets being dead, their thought reigns. Having been, they are." The living man of genius is thus a statue about to enter into the future that is already the past.

When Hugo asserts that art is more lasting than any given religion, this is not to undercut the religious impulse, but to affirm more strongly the sacerdotal function of the artist. The poet, according to Hugo's definition, is *Sacerdos magnus.* Sharing with the Symbolists visionary and esoteric concerns, Hugo sees the Book as a spiritual instrument, and poetry as a second creation. Interestingly, the Symbolists rarely attacked Hugo; Mallarmé in fact reprimanded Claudel for speaking ill of him. What distinguishes Hugo from the Symbolists' as well as from Flaubert's glorification of literature as an absolute, is that Hugo's notion of "*création seconde*" never leads to the cult of negativity. God remains present to the mystery of art. "God creates art by man." The artist collaborates, substitutes, competes—he is never alone. To suggest this association, Hugo invokes honored symbols and metaphors: Socrates' demon, the bush of Moses, Numa's nymph, the spirit of Plotinus, Mahomet's dove—above all the image of the summit (the *cime*), point of encounter between God and genius. Equality reigns not only between the Equals. Hugo speaks of the poet's apparent "equality with God."

The theory of Equals leads Hugo into interesting difficulties. In an oxymoronic juxtaposition of images, the "immovable" giants of the human mind are defined as a "dynasty." This word, referring to a succession of rulers, implies a sense of temporal continuity. But art, Hugo insists, is precisely not successive or cumulative. The originality of masterpieces rests in their own origin: they are always *other* and alone. Poetry is "immanent," he explains, stressing thereby the immediate and irreplaceable plenitude achieved by genuine masterpieces. For art is not perfectible, not susceptible to

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improvement. It is governed by the absolute, exists in an eternal time, and constitutes the one exception to the law of displacement and replacement. The ideal does not budge, it knows no shifting horizons. The master poets do not outshine each other, do not climb on each other, do not use each other as a stepping stone. Each masterpiece is its own world: the result of a control that leaves no room to chance. Each creation is the offspring of will.

But how compatible is this notion of atemporal plenitude with the belief in historical process and progress to which Hugo is so strongly committed? Hugo comes out rather categorically: "Art is not susceptible of intrinsic progress"—a statement which leads him to make an important distinction between art and science. If one looks for progress, he maintains, one must turn to scientific achievements. Gutenberg's invention of the printing press, for instance, holds out promise of perpetual movement and uninterruptible progress. It can happen, of course, that the distinction between science and art is illustrated by one and the same figure. "Pascal the scientist is outrun; Pascal the writer is not." For in the realm of science, contrary to that of art, all is relative and subject to the principle of replacement. All there is subject to linear time and chance; discoveries are the result of endless gropings and productive errors. Each successive scientist casts previous achievements into relative oblivion. Science goes on ceaselessly erasing itself, but these are fruitful erasures—*ratures fécondes*.

The contrast between the linear time of science and progress, and the timeless space of art, leads to another major difficulty that nettles Hugo during his exile years, as he tries to reconcile his beliefs in the autonomy of art with a deepening interest in the cause of the Revolution. Having assumed, after 1851, a prophetic political role, Hugo felt increasingly the need to neutralize the charge that he had been one of the earliest proponents of art for art's sake. Book VI of *William Shakespeare,* entitled "The Beautiful Servant of the True," is clearly designed to dispel the persistent image of its author as an advocate of the self-serving function of art. The coining of the expression *l'art pour l'art* was indeed often attributed to Hugo. In *William Shakespeare*, the formula *l'art pour le progrès* is proposed as a loftier one. The mission of men of genius, we are told, is the forward march of humanity.

An even more paradoxical development on the usefulness of the Beautiful was finally not included in *William Shakespeare.* In pages

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entitled "*L'Utilité du beau*," Hugo tried to adapt the aesthetic views he held in the 1830s to his more recent political and metaphysical concerns—a somewhat acrobatic task. By means of curiously modern-sounding remarks on the hidden intentionality of the text, as well as Victor Cousin-inspired ideas concerning the identity of the Beautiful and the Ideal, Hugo boldly sketched a theory about the utility of the useless which foreshadows the rich developments, to be found in *Les Travailleurs de la mer*, on the mysterious ways God makes himself manifest in the apparently destructive toiling of the sea.

Hugo in fact goes far beyond establishing a relation between aesthetic pleasure and virtue. He places all of nineteenth-century art squarely in the service of Revolution. Hence the baffling association of genius with progress. We were asked to see men of genius in a timeless scheme (though Hugo cautiously uses the expression "intrinsic progress"). We are now told that God continues to add to the great roster of exceptional poets "when the needs of progress require it," that the function of genius quite specifically is to espouse and promote the Revolution. The benefit is supposedly mutual. The cause of the Revolution in turn serves the cause of art—and, beyond art, the spiritual needs of man. "Never have the faculties of the human soul, deepened and enriched by the meaningful ploughing of revolutions, been profounder and loftier." The nineteenth century, which in this optimistic view marks the coming of age of humanity, also confers a new role on the writer. The political apocalypse signifies a new beginning, imposes new obligations, provides new opportunities. Political commitment defines the modern writer's originality.

The association of modern genius and Revolution is thus spelled out in apparent contradiction to art's supposed freedom from the laws of historical progress. In a preliminary note, Hugo went so far as to write: "Poets, above all, are devoured by the idea of progress." The nineteenth century, according to Hugo, is without precedent. It is the offspring of an idea. And that idea—the Revolution—is the grand climacteric of humanity, the turning point in a providential plan in which good can take the form of the hydra, and every thinker carries in him something of the *monstre sublime*. But the monstrosity of revolutionary violence (for that is what above all obsesses Hugo) also explains the dream of transcending revolution, of seeking higher harmony through an exit from his-

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tory, through the negation of the destructive principle associated with any linear historical scheme.

What then is this notion of genius—at once committed to change and permanence, free from the laws of temporality, yet serving God's mysterious will-in-history? Hugo appears to reject any system. His theory of literature pretends to be untheoretical. "Shakespeare is a genius, not a system." Yet the underlying pattern is clear. It is that of self-cancelling contradiction. Great art brings into fruitful and self-effacing clash will and predestination; it is based on what Hugo calls "double reflection," the faculty of seeing the two sides of things simultaneously. Shakespeare is *totus in antithesi*, mirroring the ubiquity of opposites. The connivance between genius and the supernatural is the corollary of this insight into the "universal antithesis." The suggestion is that genius is more than human: a universal spirit, an "*âme cosmique*."

Recurrent sea images convey the sense of power and of mystery, the sea changes that are part of the games of infinity, the fecund interplay of anger and of peace. The *hommes océans*, the creative and revelatory poets, know the "intoxication of the high sea"; reflecting the divine principle, they are "All in One" in their "inexhaustibly varied monotony." The sea metaphor projects a double axis: the horizontal expanse (analogue of the desert image associated with the voice of the prophet and a transfiguring fall); the depth to be plumbed, inversion of the image of an elating ascent. Each genius, according to Hugo, is an abyss as well as a summit. Hence the symbol of the promontory, specifically associated with the apocalyptic vision of Patmos—that frightening "promontory of thought," from which the visionary artist perceives the shadow. Revealingly, Hugo's list of the world's fourteen great men (the fifteenth remains modestly unnamed) includes at least five prophets or biblical figures: Job, who achieved greatness at the bottom of his spiritual pit; Isaiah, the "mouthpiece of the desert"; Ezekiel, the wild, "demagogue of the Bible"; Saint John, the man of Patmos who faced revelatory violence with a tongue of fire and the "profound smile of madness"; Saint Paul who, on the road to Damascus, fell into the truth. And it is telling that the last two words of *William Shakespeare* should be the name of Jesus Christ.

Three elements remain constant in Hugo's portrayal of genius: symbolic power, religious awe, and *démesure*—or excess. The potential for symbolization appears boundless. It is as though all of hu-

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man experience could be contained in a single brain. Elsewhere, Hugo wrote that a poet is a "world" locked up in a human skull. ("*Un poète est un monde enfermé dans un homme.*") Some of the chief tenets of symbolism are affirmed in *William Shakespeare*: the poet's intuition of the occult sense of existence, the heroic quality of poetic vision, the gospel of correspondences, the belief that the world is a text that speaks to us but needs to be deciphered, semiotic links between the realms of the visible and the invisible binding infinite manifestations to a single principle. The Symbolist poets, though often made uneasy by his overpowering voice, were perfectly aware of Hugo's contribution. Baudelaire had earlier praised Hugo's ability to decipher the great dictionary of nature, and to dig into the inexhaustible treasure of the *universal analogy*.

The relation between this pervasive symbolization and a yearning for the *sacred* is obvious. Hugo stresses the poet's sense of religious terror. The *vates*, or prophetic voice, surrenders to an all-consuming "religious meditation." Even in the great poet's lighter moments, one can detect the pressures of the unknown, the all-powerful *horreur sacrée* of art. Their vision hurts our minds' eyes, much as Bishop Myriel's goodness in *Les Misérables* hurts and saves Valjean's conscience. The breath of genius, the "*souffle du génie*," is defined as the "respiration of God through man." Appropriately, the section that concludes with the metaphor of the promontory ("*Un génie est un promontoire dans l'infini*") evokes the elation of gazing at a beclouded headland jutting out into the sea, eerily inviting one to perambulate among the winds.

But the most important characteristic of genius, from an aesthetic point of view, is what Hugo calls *démesure*—excess, overabundance, boundless prodigality. Shakespeare recognizes no limits, Aeschylus makes of sea and mountains the colossal protagonists of his drama. Genius simply cannot be measured by the restrictive norms of "good taste." Impossible exhaustion is the corollary of impossible sobriety. Great art is orgiastic, it has profound affinities with the carnival, the Mardi gras. Sacerdotal obscenity is at the heart of Aristophanes. The mysterious, ferocious laughter of art is a manifestation of an excess of sap.

The sexual connotations of *démesure* are aggressively obvious—especially when related to the sterility of criticism. Genius offends the academician as the stallion offends the mule. Chastity is the eunuch's pride; the seraglio displeases the impotent visitor. For gen-

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ius is a condition of "orgiastic omnipotence," a steady intercourse between "lewdness and thought," a movable orgy with the "bacchante" called inspiration.

In rhetorical terms, the praise of *démesure* calls for a defense of hyperbole, declamation, amplification. Hugo challenges the castrating prescriptions of rhetoric. Aeschylus' metaphors, Hugo claims, are outsized; his tragic effects are like blows struck at the spectators. What value then is there in textbook wisdom, when deeper wisdom lies in such extravagance? Ever since his early pages on Mirabeau's eloquence, Hugo has been aware of the protean metamorphoses of his own images. But this theory and praxis of metaphorical profusion serve a deeper fusion.

The praise of excess has, of course, political implications. *Bon goût* is denounced not merely as a form of gastritis, but as submissiveness to Law and Order. Dethroned "good taste" is treated as a *ci-devant* form of divine right. Hugo equates the question of Taste with the question of Power. Ironizing on sobriety as a servant's qualification, Hugo sees a certain type of criticism as a literary police force faithfully serving the establishment, the "*grand parti de l'Ordre.*" But there are philosophical implications as well. Hugo's stance could, by anticipation, be called anti-structuralist. Hostile to all reductive schemes, he proclaims the irreducible uniqueness of genius. Awe is the beginning of all sound criticism. It is as though poetics had to be re-invented to account for each great text. A superior work of art is always a transgression, and this transgression instills fear in the author himself. "Shakespeare shudders at his own depth."

The fear of transgression is the corollary of a *pro-domo* defense of orgiastic creativity. The prohibition against haunting the "tavern of the sublime" is very much perceived in terms of a self-glorification which ends up by converting God himself into Supreme Poet. The motto *totus in antithesi*—the characteristic of his own art—applies first of all to divine creation. It is the perpetual yes *and* no which allows the man of genius not only to fill and fulfill an entire century, but to participate in the tragic delight ("*volupté tragique*") of all of nature. Hugo's own apotheosis is inscribed in the tribute to Shakespeare, as he sees him (-self) bending and weeping over human suffering, and achieving his transfiguration as he stands up, tender and terrible, above the *misérables* of this world.

Genius is ultimately associated with sacred lasciviousness, the

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"*rut universel*" of perpetual becoming. And this exuberance of all creation, this terrifying hilarity which is the tragic laughter of art as well as the ominous laughter from below ("the word for laughter comes from the abyss"), perhaps provides the deepest link between genius and the prophecies of history. For Hugo, the hour of laughter is indeed the hour of Revolution. And Revolution is that reading of the divine text of history which most clearly establishes God as pre-existent, co-existent, and immanent author-genius mirrored or postulated (mimesis or poesis?) in the literary text.

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JOHN O'BRIEN

TV

THE SIX O'CLOCK NEWS IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY a man with gray hair and a mustache. It seems he says the most remarkable things. Now after the important news he tells you a human interest story. He is telling you about the cities and the opossum. The possum, he says, the oldest living mammal, has outlived the dinosaur and now is appearing in cities all over the country. There are pictures now of deserted New York streets. It's night and fat rat-tailed possums are walking slowly out of alleys. The news commentator says the opossum has almost no intelligence, is not fast or strong, cannot defend itself, but has a remarkably short gestation period and will eat anything. You sit up quickly in your seat. That man, he seems so very calm about all this. Then as the news starts the sign-off, you begin to wonder again who this man is. No, he wouldn't lie to you. Is he your father? You have watched him every night for as long as you can remember, but you have never seen him stand up. You wonder again if he's wearing pants. You wish he would wink at you. He smiles and reminds you of the man in the Alma Liquor Store who, when you buy a bottle each evening, puts it in a paper bag and tells you to have a good night.

The station breaks. A woman who looks only a little like your mother is dancing with her cat in the kitchen. The cha-cha, you think. They are very happy.

Waiting for the first evening show, you pour another glass of bourbon. On the top of the TV, there is a glass bowl where your son's hermit crab lives. The crab will stay in its shell till the late show. You call the crab Prufrock. Your son doesn't call it anything, but often picks it up and strokes its shell. You had a kitten when you were a kid.

The rescue squad solves another problem. A young couple has bought a home above an unknown oil field. The man is trapped in the basement, oil up to his neck. His wife has called for help and is now running down the street to meet the rescue squad. It's very

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close, but they get him out. Then the doctors cure children and save women, and lawyers set people free. The police are always there.

Howard Cosell, our greatest poet, broadcasts the game. The quarterback in white shoes jumps back to throw a touchdown pass. The crowd is on its feet. Let's play that again, Howard says. Jesus, you think, Keats couldn't have said it better. The camera rolls in slow motion and there before you is a ballet. The quarterback moves back slowly from the line. The rhinoceros men crash forward. They want to stop him. They get closer. You know there is no hope, but then, just before he goes down, the ball leaves his hand and floats down the field toward the black man whose gift of speed is beautifully slowed down. The ball drifts into his hands and as he crosses the goal line, the blonde cheerleader on the side rises slowly into the air, her legs bent and spread, her head back with eyes closed. Her mouth makes a small "o." And you feel lonely because you think no one else has seen this.

The stagecoach rolls west as it always has. Inside there is the schoolteacher named Brown Eyes. She is from the East and will marry the rancher. There is the saloon girl named Kitty. If things go right for her, she will kiss the sheriff and become virginal once again. And that man against the side of the couch, the one Brown Eyes and Kitty don't know anything about and secretly love, you know him. His name is Lightning and his hat slants down to throw a shadow on his eyes. His gun is low on his leg. He will learn again that you can't settle down or even fill an inside straight and that no matter how fast you are, there's someone faster.

Hunters from the city are in the jungle. They've come to violate the elephant graveyard and this upsets you. You know that elephants go to a certain place just before they die. They don't want to embarrass anyone and this strikes you as very sensible. Will the hunters get the ivory? No, because Tarzan waits behind the bird voices. Jane is in a tree above him. She calls to Tarzan and then dives to him. Their bodies meet making a sound that reminds you of the sound the steak made when you dropped it on the kitchen floor.

That man in the diving suit steps on the moon and immediately

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looks at his footprint in the lunar sand. He raises the flag. Later a reporter is on the street. He stops a man. Today, sir, he says, in 1969, America has placed a man on the moon. It's a rerun.

From the castle ledge, Frankenstein watches a column of light approaching. He stares in wonder. Of course, it's the village people coming to kill him again. They lift torches and pitchforks. Drawing near, they shout slogans that sound to you like a collective murmuring of the words peas and carrots, peas and carrots. You understand this. The monster waiting in the castle.

This man sells cars between the all-night movies. He's not responsible for the death of anyone you've ever known; nevertheless, he's the most dangerous man in Palo Alto because, you think, he wants to love. He's not like you. Now he reads a viewer's letter.

> Dear Jay Brown,
>
> Since my wife died, I water her roses every day. Sometimes I get up and water them at night. But what I really want to talk about are crooks. I mean, the ones that don't have the guts to rob you face to face. They wait till you're not home and *then* rob you. Last week I went out to buy a tombstone for my wife and when I came home, the TV was gone. Then when I went upstairs . . .

Jay Brown's hand falls to his side. He can't go on. I'm going off the air, he says. I don't want to, but these cars, I can't sell these cars. I don't even want to sell them anymore, but would you buy one? No, no, not right now. Stay with me tonight. But tomorrow would you go to Spartan Dodge and buy a car? I don't want to go off the air. Who will the boys in Soledad write to? Where will the night people send their owls?

And Sesame Street comes on. You see Ernie and Bert and the rest. A child turns to embrace a puppet. It's Kermit the Frog, more real than the hand beside him. Big Bird plays a flute and walks away. The children follow, then the song begins. It tells you the show is almost over. It's dusk on Sesame Street and a gentle man stands below the house steps. He smiles at you, extends an open hand. No, he's not your father. He says softly, "Come on, let's go down the street." You want to, but you're thirty-one. You live in California.

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You begin to understand these commercials. There's a girdle with no woman inside it diving into a pool. It swims a length and gets out. A line of safety razors swings across the stage. They kick like chorus girls and where the blade goes in there are lips. They sing. An acorn hits Chicken Little on the head. He goes to tell the king. Before he gets there, he runs between parked cars and is killed by a passing motorist. You look around the room. There are no children to watch this. You rise to change the channels. As the stations flicker past, your suspicion is confirmed; everything *does* happen at once. Washington in a Volkswagen crosses the Bridge of Tokara. Porky Pig meets Moses in the subway. Gunslingers mow the early Christians down. King Kong dances with Fred Astaire. And still the lady in red leads Dillinger down the street.

A blonde woman with bow lips stands in a dark room. Her eyes are round with fear. Without her knowledge the monster's hairy arm slowly reaches from the open door. This, you know is true. From time to time the hairy arm reaches from the door. It's the dark side of your own mind reaching for you.

Prufrock extends a cautious claw from his shell, then begins to scurry against the glass. There is a delicate clinking sound, a counterpart to the ice in your glass of bourbon. You raise your glass to him.

Now the early news. Shots of smogged L.A. in the new light. It's beautiful. "Afternoon of a Faun" plays softly in the background. Another sensible man smiles at you. He too is very calm. He tells you what has happened and then in the middle of it, says, "And now about the radio interference the jet pilots have been having trouble with. No, it's not the Communists jamming us. It's not life from outer space, as some people would like to believe. We know now, and catch this, it's radio and TV waves that escaped through the ionosphere and have been bouncing around out there and are now coming back. Our pilots are getting programs from the thirties." He goes on to the next topic.

The TV waves drift into space like pollen, and the universe, being what it is, sends them back, years, perhaps centuries later, to be seen again.

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ROBERT ASAHINA

Theatre Chronicle

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE, according to a variation on an old joke: those who divide the world into two kinds of people, and those who don't. Peter Shaffer certainly belongs to the first kind. For nearly a quarter-century, he has presented an almost Manichean world-view in one play after another. The characters and settings change: Pizarro and Atahualpa, conquerer and conquered in sixteenth-century Peru; Martin Dysart and Alan Strang, psychiatrist and patient in contemporary England; Antonio Salieri and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Kapellmeister* and Chamber Composer (and possibly murderer and victim) in eighteenth-century Vienna. But the basic plot—a struggle between two opposing but mutually dependent males—remains the same, whether the play is called *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1965), *Equus* (1974), or, most recently, *Amadeus,* the critical and box-office success of the current season.

To be sure, *Amadeus* is much more sophisticated than Shaffer's earlier plays. His first work, *Five Finger Exercise* (1958), was a bourgeois domestic drama, full of recriminations and revelations, conventional in both content and form. And his subsequent one-act plays, *The Private Ear* and *The Public Eye* (1962) and *The White Liars* and *Black Comedy* (1968), as well as the full-length *Shrivings* (1970), did not depart from the mundane world that they both portrayed and belonged to. But then Shaffer found God as a theme in *The Royal Hunt of the Sun,* and later discovered psychoanalysis and arena staging in *Equus.* Now, in *Amadeus,* he combines theology and psychoanalysis and presents them along with his latest formal discovery—Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt.*

The curtain is up; the house and stage lights are on. In the middle of the stage, with his back to the audience, a man is slumped in a wheelchair. All the lights dim; there is a murmur of background voices that grow louder until two characters emerge from the opposite wings and talk to each other and to the audience. They are the *venticelli*—the "little winds" who carry rumors to their invalid master, Salieri, and to us.

When they began speaking, the stage lights rose, and my spirits sank. "The whole city is talking," the *venticelli* chatter, and in this clumsiest of all possible ways—having them address the audience—Shaffer lays the groundwork for the story that is about to unfold. It is 1823, on the eve of what appears to be the death of Salieri—the First *Kapellmeister* in the court of Emperor Joseph II of Austria, the composer of more than 40 operas as well as various oratorios and vocal and instrumental pieces, and the teacher of Beethoven, Schubert, and Liszt. Thirty-two years earlier, Mozart—born six years after Salieri—had died under uncertain circumstances, and now the older man has decided to confess that he poisoned the younger composer.

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Salieri swivels in his wheelchair, stands, and speaks to the audience—"Ghosts of the Future," he calls us—as the house lights grow brighter, supposedly so that the old man can see our faces. In a lengthy monologue that serves as a framing sequence to the play proper, which takes place in a flashback, he confides to us that he had, in his childhood, made a bargain with God. "Let me be a composer," he had asked. "Grant me sufficient fame to enjoy it. In return I will live with virtue. I will strive to better the lot of my fellows. And I will honor You with much music all the days of my life." He then throws off his dressing gown, straightens up, and appears to us as he did when he was thirty-two years younger. "I present to you," he announces, "my last composition, entitled *The Death of Mozart; or, Did I Do It?*" Inviting us along, as the lights dim, he steps back into the 1780s.

Unfortunately, Shaffer's use of this Brechtian staging to invite us to distance ourselves from what will follow means that we cannot totally disregard the playwright's intellectual pretensions. We could ignore the irrelevant staging and even the psychodrama of *Equus,* because the plot was little more than a detective story in sophisticated drag; throughout, like Dr. Dysart, we could chiefly concern ourselves with discovering why Alan Strang blinded all those horses. Likewise, we could watch *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* as nothing but a costume epic about conquistadors and Incas, who just happened to speak a lot of mumbo-jumbo about the supernatural because they both belonged to premodern societies.

But by asking us to regard, as the main character does, the story of *Amadeus* as a "composition"—a play-within-a-play, a drama within quotation marks—Shaffer raises some important questions about the meaning of his work that he then doesn't bother to answer or even to address. How seriously, for instance, are we to take Salieri's claim that he poisoned Mozart? Rumors about the "murder" circulated throughout the nineteenth century; Rimsky-Korsakoff even based an opera, *Mozart and Salieri* (1897), on them. No contemporary authority puts any stock in the stories, however, and Shaffer certainly does not believe, and does not show in his play, that Salieri was literally a murderer.

Yet the playwright obviously believes, or at least dramatizes the belief, that Salieri was in some significant sense indirectly responsible for Mozart's death. Near the end of the play, Salieri announces to the dying composer: "We are both poisoned, Amadeus. I with you: you with me. . . . Ten years of my hate have poisoned you to death." How so? It was a *crime passionnel,* of a sort, although as Shaffer portrays him, Salieri is a man driven by relatively banal passions. Indeed, the character acknowledges himself a "mediocrity." He struck that bargain with God because he "wanted fame," so he could "blaze like a comet across the firmament of Europe." He establishes himself as a court musician in Vienna and then encounters Mozart, who is struggling to make a living. When Salieri first hears the younger man's music, he is consumed with an even baser passion: "I envied Mozart from the depths of my soul."

What particularly infuriates Salieri and stokes the flames of his envy is

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the disparity he perceives between the beautiful art and the base soul of his rival. "It seemed to me that I had heard a voice of God," Salieri tells us after listening to the *Adagio* from the *Serenade for thirteen wind instruments* (K. 361), "and that it issued from a creature whose own voice I had also heard—and it was the voice of an obscene child!" As Shaffer presents him (based in part on published correspondence), Mozart is a sniggering, truculent case of arrested development, given to foot-stomping, lisping, prancing, mincing, coprophilia, sadomasochism, and possibly homosexuality. And to Salieri, it is an outrage that God has chosen such an unworthy mouthpiece on earth.

In fact, Salieri regards the younger musician's art and very existence as a betrayal of that deal he struck with God so many years before. "The creature's dreadful giggle was the laughter of God," he complains. "You gave me the desire to serve You," he tells the Almighty. "You put into me perception of the Incomparable . . . then ensured that I would know myself forever mediocre. . . . They say the spirit bloweth where it listeth: I tell you NO! It must list to virtue or not blow at all!"

So, in Act Two, Salieri's life acquires "a terrible and thrilling purpose. The blocking of God in one of his purest manifestations. I had the power. God needed Mozart to let himself into the world. And Mozart needed me to get him worldly advancement. So it would be a battle to the end—and Mozart was the battleground." He decides to "reduce the man" to "reduce the God." Occupying the superior position at the court, Salieri is able to thwart Mozart at every stage of his career. As Shaffer tells it, Salieri sabotages *The Marriage of Figaro* by limiting it to merely nine performances; he encourages Mozart to write *The Magic Flute* just so the Masons will cut off their financial aid to the impoverished composer; he offers himself as a father figure to the younger man after the death of Leopold Mozart and then makes sure that the bereaved son is paid only a trifling salary for his services as Chamber Composer; and he finally tries to frighten Mozart to death by disguising himself as the *Commendatore* from *Don Giovanni* and presenting himself to the deranged composer, who is working on the *Requiem Mass* on his deathbed.

Much to his astonishment, Salieri at first finds that he is not punished but apparently rewarded for all these plots against his rival. He is appointed *Kapellmeister* and honored "as infinitely the superior composer. And this despite the fact that these were the . . . years in which Mozart wrote his best keyboard concerti and his string quartets. Each was played once—then totally forgotten!" Yet God eventually makes Salieri pay the price for the fame he had bargained for so many years before: "I was to be bricked up in fame! Embalmed in fame! Buried in fame—but for work I knew to be absolutely worthless! This was my sentence: I must endure thirty years of being called 'Distinguished' by people incapable of distinguishing! . . . And finally—His masterstroke—it would all be taken away from me. Every scrap. I must survive to see myself become extinct!"

So, in the last scene of the play, Salieri returns to 1823 and the framing sequence and resolves to achieve immortality by falsely confessing to Mo-

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zart's murder and then killing himself. But God fools him one last time: nobody believes him, and Salieri survives the suicide attempt. Thwarted and resigned to his fate, he then addresses the last line of *Amadeus* to the "Ghosts of the Future" in the audience: "Mediocrities everywhere—now and to come—I absolve you all. Amen."

The least that can be said about this extraordinary conclusion is that it is preposterous. Why should we need absolution? Does Shaffer mean to suggest that, because of our imaginative participation in the play from Salieri's perspective, we are implicated in his crimes? Yet surely it is Salieri, not the audience, who is guilty—of envy, at least, if not of murder. And who is he to call us mediocrities? After all, the only confession that we or any of the characters are expected to believe is Salieri's admission that he is the "Patron Saint of Mediocrity."

But is he? The facts certainly indicate otherwise; Salieri definitely was not in Mozart's league, but he surely is remembered, as hundreds of truly ordinary late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century musicians are not. Still, the question concerns not historical but dramatic truth. And it must be said that *Amadeus* has a hollow ring.

To begin with, as John Simon has noted, it is a mark of the genuine mediocrity not to recognize either his own limitations or the excellence of others. Thus Shaffer sounds a false note when he has Salieri bitterly tell God: "My only reward . . . is to be the sole man alive in this time who shall clearly recognize Your Incarnation." Furthermore, since Shaffer has already asked us to share Salieri's viewpoint, this pronouncement seems like an invitation to the audience to congratulate itself on its superior taste: since all of us recognize Mozart's worth, we can be both sympathetic toward Salieri and condescending toward the other characters, who fail to appreciate the genius in their midst.

Inviting this kind of patronizing historicism raises certain difficulties, however, which are nowhere more apparent than in Shaffer's characterization of Salieri. The mainspring of the plot is the composer's sense of betrayal at God's having chosen as His voice on earth not a virtuous man like himself, but an amoral, if not immoral, "creature" like Mozart. Yet the notion that talent should belong to the virtuous—that geniuses should perforce be moral exemplars or, conversely, that good men deserve to be recognized for their art as well as for their good deeds—is ludicrous, at best. It is also a particularly odd idea for Salieri to have, since we are also supposed to believe that, until the time of his "betrayal," he had been the kind of devout Catholic for whom virtue should have been its own reward. Early in the play, he disparagingly tells us that his parents' "notion of God was a superior Habsburg emperor, inhabiting a Heaven only slightly farther off than Vienna. All they required of Him was to protect commerce, and keep them forever preserved in mediocrity. My own requirements were very different." Of course they were—only someone who believed in God in the first place would make a deal with Him.

So we are presented with a dilemma: either the very idea that animates the plot is ridiculous, or the character whose behavior is motivated by that idea is self-contradictory, and thus equally ridiculous. Neither possi-

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bility seems to faze Shaffer, since both flatter the audience's sense of superiority to the past. We "Ghosts of the Future" don't believe in God, so it's all too easy for us to tolerate the contradictory actions of those who do. (Or supposedly do. Chasing after every cheap laugh, Shaffer throws a few crumbs to the secular audience by having Salieri declare in an aside: "Italians are fond of waxworks. . . . Our religion is largely based on them.") On the other hand, thanks to psychoanalysis and the century-and-a-half between the time of the play and today, we are also too sophisticated to be shocked by the revelation of, for instance, Mozart's "true" character—titillated, perhaps, but not shocked, by the idea that virtue and genius do not go hand in hand. In fact, we are entertained.

The problem, of course, is that the formal device Shaffer has chosen—the frank acknowledgement of the presence of the audience by the main character to engender a sense of "alienation"—was never intended by its inventor to entertain. To be sure, there has always been a great gap between Brecht's theory of the role of "*V-effekt*" in "epic theater" and the actual emotional response elicited by his works. Nonetheless, rather than even trying to challenge the audience to be critical of the drama unfolding before it, Shaffer encourages the "Ghosts of the Future" to be complacent by reinforcing a sense of superiority that follows from nothing but their (our) residing in the future (the present), rather than the late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century.

Shaffer's historicism in *Amadeus* is also worth noting because it apparently reverses the pessimistic attitude regarding the future (the present) that had been a characteristic theme in his earlier works. In *Equus*, Dysart, lost in his picture books, dreams of the gods of ancient Greece. Presented with Alan, an animal-killer seemingly driven to religious fervor by the Furies themselves, the doctor's belief in his ability—nay, his very right—to heal with the modern tool of psychoanalysis is shaken. "That boy has known a passion more ferocious than I have felt in any second of my life," he says of Alan. "And let me tell you something: I envy it. . . . Can you think of anything worse one can do to anybody than take away their worship?" And Dysart's lack of faith in the future is underscored by his loveless and childless marriage, which finds its perfect symbolic expression in his "special dream" about "carving up children."

Likewise, in *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, Pizarro—a bastard child, unmarried and never a father—muses that "Time cheats us all the way [though] having children goes some steps to defeating it." But the aging conquistador sees something even better in the primitive Atahualpa, also a bastard: he is "an immortal man in whom all his people live completely. He has an answer for time." And in *Shrivings*, the venerable philosopher Gideon Petrie renounces sex and drives away his wife, childless, only to seek as a surrogate child the son of his former disciple.

It should be clear that the homoerotic elements apparent in *Amadeus* have been much more explicit in Shaffer's previous plays. Salieri's love-hate affair with Mozart is seemingly less important to the plot than his relationship with God, or than the competition between Walter and Clive for the affections of Clive's mother was in *Five Finger Exercise*, or the ri-

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valry between Tchaik and Ted over Doreen was in *The Private Ear*, or the triangle formed by Julian, Charles and Belinda was in *The Public Eye*, or the trio of Frank, Tom and Sue was in *The White Liars*. There is no important romantic triangle in *Amadeus*, or in *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* or *Equus*; as Shaffer has become more sophisticated, he has stripped his works of such unnecessary elements as women. Which is not to say, however, that they don't continue to figure as significant secondary characters who contribute to the homoerotic tension. Just as Alan refuses Jill Mason after she offers herself, naked, at the climax of *Equus*, Salieri spurns the spread-eagled Constanze Mozart—in the key scene at the beginning of Act Two of *Amadeus*, when the composer renounces God—even though she has decided to accept his offer to secure a court position for her husband in exchange for her favors.

In neither case is the rejection believable, but the latter refusal is particularly astonishing since it was Salieri, after all, who proposed the deal. He first confesses, "I would have liked her . . . then more than ever," but then turns around in the very next line and declares, out of the blue, by way of explaining his inconsistent behavior: "My quarrel now wasn't with Mozart—it was through him! Through him to God." One senses that it is not the character but the playwright who is rejecting the woman.

Thus romantic love—or love between men and women that results in children—has figured less and less in Shaffer's work, and the competition of two males over a female has also gradually ceased to be an important plot mechanism. Instead, Shaffer has dramatized what is, apparently, to him a grander passion: the mutually destructive need of two men for each other. "He has something for me," Pizarro says of Atahualpa—and he doesn't mean the roomful of gold that he has demanded of the Incas as a ransom for their captive ruler. And the noble savage says of his conqueror: "I see my father" in his face. Yet, in the name of a God who no longer commands his belief, the Spaniard kills the Indian, who at first thought that the conquistador was himself a god. Likewise, Dysart "sacrifices [Alan] to the Normal" by curing him and thus robbing him of the passion that the doctor had so envied in the patient who needed him. And, once again, an older man envies and destroys a younger man who depends on him in *Amadeus*—a true *crime passionnel*, though not as the French usually imagine it.

So we can, after all, believe that the *Kapellmeister* is a murderer—of his own humanity. It is not, as he claims, his hate that has poisoned Mozart but his own envy that has poisoned Salieri, just as it did Pizarro and Dysart. And the murderous anger that leads Salieri to "poison" Mozart, Pizarro to kill Atahualpa, and Dysart to destroy Alan's gods is the rage of an aging and bitter man at the freedom of a younger male who represents all that he is not: a primitive to both the conquistador and the psychoanalyst; a genius to the *Kapellmeister*. Strip away the metaphysics, the accents that thrill the Broadway Anglophiles, the wonderfully versatile and elegant sets by John Bury, and *Amadeus* is really about *amour-propre*—of a particularly twisted kind.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

American Landscape Painting, 1850–1875[1]

UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY the American painting tradition was in large part a figure tradition deeply indebted to England. Indeed, not a few painters whose ambition exceeded the challenges they found in the colonies and the young republic emigrated to England to become part of what must have seemed to them the artistic mainstream. Copley and West were prominent among these, and Copley, at least, changed his style in the process. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, other trends emerged, bringing landscape increasingly to the fore in the United States and drawing on artistic traditions distant from England's both in time and place. By the 1840s Thomas Cole (1801–1848) and Asher B. Durand (1796–1886) were focusing on the American wilderness in canvases that suggested Claude, on the one hand, and certain strains of German painting, particularly German Romanticism, on the other. Cole was the more dramatic of the two, working not only with the relatively restrained and neutral hues appropriate to landscape, but with touches of bright color, strong contrasts of light and dark, and highly characterized three-dimensional forms. These painterly means were justified iconographically by Cole's use of autumnal scenery, oblique lighting or backlighting that threw objects into relief, and discretely described natural or man-made presences within his compositions. In *The Clove, Catskills* of 1827, for instance, rugged mountains form triangular flats entering the composition from its left and right edges and receding into a crepuscular distance in contrasts of light and dark. A gnarled branch in the immediate foreground stretches out over some dramatically lit rocks, and the whole evokes a wild and untenanted nature. By *Summer Sunset* of 1834, both Cole's subjects and the means used to represent those subjects had moderated in a way that clearly suggests the influence of Claude. Here the composition is divided into two major areas, each representing roughly half the canvas. The light sunset sky at the top is a foil to the darkened and gently rolling landscape below, the two tied together by the tonal middle ground provided by a lake, as well as by the tree that rises up from ground to sky, emerging from the obscurity of the former to become a silhouette against the latter. The open rolling landscape provides a continuous transition to the horizon, and the whole is bathed in the gentle backlighting of evening. This formula served Cole throughout

[1] These reflections were provoked by the exhibition "American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850–1875" held at the National Gallery of Art, 10 February–15 June 1980. I am indebted to Jerome Edelstein, librarian of the National Gallery, for making space available to me in which to write.

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his subsequent career, although he generally dramatized the lighting somewhat and gave his pictures moral overtones by introducing figures that were pointedly allegorical in intent (*The Voyage of Life*, etc.).

Durand continued this strain in American landscape into the 1860s and 1870s, softening its effects under the influence of a somewhat different esthetic sensibility. His *Landscape with Birches* of 1855, with its mountainous distance and twisted trunk in the foreground, embodies some of the drama of Cole's *Clove,* but is more placid in its unified lighting and less theatrical in composition. The birches rising up at the left of the picture spring out of a foreground that occupies the entire bottom of the composition, spreading their branches across the sky at the top to embrace the entire canvas in a huge "C." The light, atmospheric distance seen through the opening of this "C" is modulated to the dark foreground by the dappled trunks of the birches and their lacy leaves against the sky, giving a more continuous and unified, less contrasty and dramatic, value structure than that of Cole. Durand's *Kaaterskill Clove* of eleven years later shows him developing still further away from Cole's sensibility, while not entirely surrendering the sharp focus, continuous recession, and contrasts of light and dark dear to both men. Here the foreground is reduced in area and reshaped into a "U," the dark trees at either side embracing a softly lit view of receding mountains and joined in the center by a geographical and tonal modulation that permits the eye to enter the landscape. Apart from the *repoussoir* trees, the landscape is regular to the point of featurelessness, emphasizing the reticence of Durand's view as opposed to Cole's, and the almost photographic impersonality of his approach to landscape. This visual, unliterary tendency is emphasized yet further in the 1878 *Sunset,* in which the softness that had appeared in Durand's backgrounds begins to invade the entire composition, and trees and mountains are reduced in importance and neutralized in character. These changes, added to the softly modulated backlighting and continuous recession emphasized by the lake at the right, draw the picture together, indicating a tendency toward disembodiment that permits the subject of the painting to be used principally as an armature for extended tonal variation.

A somewhat different tributary to the emergence of landscape as an important American genre in the third quarter of the nineteenth century is to be found in the work of Robert Salmon (1775–c. 1845). Although Salmon was, like Cole, English born, he clearly began as a disciple of Canaletto, who had lived and worked in London almost continuously between 1745 and 1755. His *Wharves of Boston* of 1829 bears all the marks of a *vedute* painter, the monochrome-appearing color scheme worked out in grays, blues, greens, and pinks, the water rendered in a small-scale, regular pattern of waves, the carefully scribed linear patterns of the city stretched out along a regular horizon, and human figures represented by freely brushed but reticent dots of relatively high valued color. Although there is an all-over organizing pattern of light and shadow, it is not overwhelmingly dramatic, and the sky dominates the picture, occupying a full

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three-quarters of its upper reaches. The whole is punctuated by a ship, placed parallel to the picture plane and to almost every other element of the painting, in the near middle distance, its masts and sails connecting sea and sky, its hull accenting the architectural background.

By 1833, Salmon, the primitive stiffness of whose painting may suggest why he had such need of the example of others, had developed toward a more Claudian manner, as *Boston Harbor from Constitution Wharf* demonstrates. Here, foreground incident is multiplied, the horizon suppressed, and the entire composition lit by a sunset which divides the picture into two large tonal areas, dramatizing it substantially. Pursuing this increased complexity of composition, Salmon developed a yet more Baroque style (*Boston Harbor from Castle Island*, 1839), strengthening his contrasts of light and dark and elaborating the patterns of billowing sails, while continuing to suppress the presence of land and buildings, thereby recalling such Dutch seascapists as van de Velde.

Although FitzHugh Lane (1804–1865) at times painted the sea in much the same spirit as Salmon, and was similarly indebted to Dutch seventeenth-century seascape, he was able to establish an independent artistic identity much closer to those of contemporary American landscape painters. His *Salem Harbor* of 1853 exhibits clear affinities with Salmon, particularly in the elaborately varied placement of ships and boats upon the water. In being less accomplished, less ambitious, and less historically aware, however, *Salem Harbor* draws nearer to the native spirit of American painting at mid-century. Varied as the placement of the painting's elements may be, the sea is rendered without the pattern of waves so favored by Salmon, it recedes as a flat plane to meet the sky at an almost featureless horizon, and the ships are discretely spaced as punctuation across its surface. The result is an emotional and pictorial calm embodied in simplified shapes that can only be described as abstracting, suggesting something about the native character of American painting as well as about why nineteenth-century landscape should have fallen into disrepute until the middle of this century. While one would hesitate to say that Lane's achievement is superior to that of Salmon at this moment in his career, it is more harmonious in that the younger painter accepts his limitations and makes use of them. Thus, the stiff "primitive" quality in the painting of both men is entirely in accord with Lane's quiet, simplified compositions and undramatic lighting, while it is at odds with Salmon's open brushwork and Baroque lighting and composition.

By the late 1850s, Lane was reducing the number of elements in his compositions and simplifying the presentations of his seas and skies by suppressing ripples on the former and clouds in the latter, as in *Gloucester Harbor at Sunset.* Here, the water reflects the sky, locking the two together in hue and value but providing textural contrast. There is a distinct tendency toward a unified and relatively little contrasted value structure, darkening at top and bottom and lightening at the horizon, and toward a grayed range of hues blending into one another. All of this is assisted iconographically by Lane's preference for views directly into a rising or

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setting sun or one obscured by clouds. None of this is to say that Lane was incapable of pictorial drama. His *Ships and an Approaching Storm Off Owl's Head, Maine* (1860), for instance, startlingly juxtaposes a ship's white sails against the threatening gray of a stormy sky and sea. Even here, however, the hue structure of the painting is almost monochrome and the overall effect, if striking, is one of great chastity and simplicity. Typical of the unifying trend in Lane's art is *Ship "Starlight" in the Fog* (1860), which hints at a knowledge of Turner, although it entirely lacks the latter's freneticism. The fog bank that occupies the upper three quarters of the painting's background, punctuated by a veiled sun reflected on the calm water below, permits Lane to develop an extended, thinly applied color modulation, the brushwork of which is all but invisible. A few ships are seen against this atmospheric ground, some melted into the fog, and the whole projects a feeling of unity and infinite extent. As Lane turned increasingly toward shore scenes and away from pure seascape, he developed greater coloristic richness and wider value contrast, as in *Brace's Rock, Brace's Cove* (1864). Here, the darker tones of his earlier neutral skies are replaced by a fairly intense blue, shading down to Lane's accustomed light—in this case white—horizon. Long fingers of rock and beach enter from the sides of the canvas, interspersed with the light silvery blue of the cove, resulting in a series of horizontal divisions that build up vertically toward the sky rather than receding. The mast of a beached boat spikes through all the layers to connect the beach and the sky, while the dark, neutral-colored rocks and light water of the cove are modulated to the sky by the middle valued blush of some rocks catching the setting sun on the horizon. Although there are overtones of Casper David Friederich in the stark contrasts of form and value, an overall placidity and the absence of moralizing freight from *Brace's Rock* stamp it as expressive of a sensibility quite distinct from that of the German Romantics.

Martin Johnson Heade (1819–1904) preferred more animated subjects than Lane, particularly shore areas where land and sea interpenetrate, and stormy weather, as well as more rigorously horizontal formats, but he retained a smooth, reticent facture, close value structure, and simplified, "primitive" rendering. His geography is unremarkable, keeping the two planes meeting less than halfway up the composition in the way Lane had also preferred, and his light sources tend to be even more veiled than those of the seascapist. Heade's preference for shoreland, often punctuated with hayricks, as in *Sunset on the Newbury Marshes* (1862), permits a differentiation of texture between water and land and a cursive interplay of foreground forms that pure seascape or landscape would have denied him. Since there are few figures or boats in his pictures, and only rounded ricks for vertical emphasis, this interplay provides the major pictorial incident. Heade's pictures tend to be close-valued and darker than Lane's, but he allows himself considerably more coloristic freedom, painting the red-orange glow of a sunset (*Duck Hunters in the Marshes*, 1866) or contrasting the roseate haze of a rising sun with the reticent blue of a dawning day (*Sunrise on the Marshes*, 1863). Rather than evaporating his horizons,

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Heade emphasizes them by darkening them with a line of hills or by simply making a sharp value distinction where ground and sky meet. Standing firmly on the ground, but looking out toward sky and sea, Heade was among the first American painters to discover the panoramic. His compositions are fitted into long horizontal frameworks that suggest lateral extent, playing that extent off against the land's recession toward a distant horizon to create extraordinary pictorial tension, a tension that has as its foil the calm projected by the extreme simplicity of his pictures.

Among the most remarkable of the American landscape painters to emerge during the third quarter of the nineteenth century were John F. Kensett (1816–1872) and Sanford Gifford (1823–1880). Kensett's work of the early fifties shows him attracted to mountain scenery and not a little indebted to the Cole-Durand tradition. *Landscape* of 1852, for instance, depicts a foreground of wild nature—rocks and gnarled trees—relieved by a river that leads the eye toward a distant mountain range dominated by a rocky peak. Above this rises a dramatic cloud-inflected sky. Although *Sunset, Camel's Hump, Vermont* (c. 1851) is similarly dramatic, the setting sun tingeing with flame the clouds that float across an intense yellow sky, the mountains that form the irregular horizon are dissolved in the glow of the sunset, and the warm bath of light that transforms their massive rockiness into an atmospheric haze suffuses the entire landscape from horizon to foreground. That landscape, rendered in a warm brown almost without coloristic relief, is brushed with the thinnest, most open of applications, reminiscent of traditional underpainting, resulting in a lightness that gives to what might otherwise be an overly theatrical scene a delicacy typical of Kensett. The progression from dark (but translucent) foreground through the middle values of the middle and background to the light of the sky reflects traditional formulas more than it does the value structures toward which Kensett was working, which are hinted at in the relative narrowness of the overall tonal range. *Beach at Newport*, of an undetermined date in the fifties, is more typical of what was to come. A curving shore in the left foreground leads up to a rocky promontory that protrudes halfway across the composition, which at its right half is divided into two nearly equal parts by the horizon between sea and sky. The shore and rocks, executed in warm but reticent hues, embrace and fix the entire composition, otherwise an extended excursus on varieties of blued gray divided into two clear zones by the horizon. By 1869, Kensett's mountain pictures had been de-dramatized in compositions that emphasized lateral extension rather than obvious movement into depth, by a choice of foregrounds largely without incident and entirely without eccentricity, and by being rendered in a closely interrelated and subtly modulated value structure lacking abrupt transitions. All this is represented in the magisterial *Lake George* of 1869, the thin brushing of which emphasizes the limpidity of its lake and sky as well as the vaporous atmosphere that veils the distant mountain. Everything blends into an expression of pictorial calm, not to say quietism, before which the temperament of the artist seems to be effaced, an effect enhanced by the almost

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total lack of obvious touch in the paint application. Still more reductivist, *Eaton's Neck, Long Island* (1872) divides the canvas into three areas, a curving beach and verdant headland at the right giving way to the sharp division between a largely unmodulated sea and a flat extent of sky. The degree to which such pictures eliminate incident of all kinds in favor of luminous and carefully worked-out color areas, often imperceptibly modulated from top to bottom, is remarkable, not to say unique, and says a great deal about the character of the native artistic genius.

Sanford Gifford was also capable of drama in his earlier works (*A Winter Twilight*, 1862, partially worked out in tones of flaming red), and developed along very much the same lines as Kensett, pursuing them even further. Like almost all his compatriot landscapists, Gifford preferred the gentle haze of backlighting, almost inevitably looking directly into a light source hidden behind mountains or haze. *Twilight on Hunter Mountain* (1866) is worked out in browns running to soft red, grayed blues running to purple, and imperceptibly inflected yellows, and the enveloping softness of sunset holds everything in its unifying embrace. By 1872, Gifford had shown the preference for extremely high valued compositions worked out largely in shades of ochre that became so characteristic of him. *On the Nile* of that year is such a work, its two large areas of apparently colorless river and sky separated by the merest of horizons and punctuated only with a felucca. The daring of such a picture for its time cannot be overemphasized. Although Gifford left the ultimate exploration of the chromatic harmonies developed in his Egyptian pictures to Whistler, he did carry the dissolution of pictorial space one step further. *October in the Catskills* of 1880 returns, on the one hand, to a more conventional compositional format, anchoring an atmospheric background with a foreground *repoussoir* of rocks and trees. On the other, it takes a daring step forward in its direct view into the sun, which dissolves the entire middle and background into a vaporous veil of gray and ochre.

Considering the interest of Kensett and Gifford in atmospheric light, and the fact that they are the epitomes of a similar interest among many of their fellow painters, it is not without relevance to point out the roots of that interest among Dutch landscapists of the seventeenth century. Cuyp, for one, was particularly fond of luminous sunset skies, and Van Goyen consistently reduced his pictures to two large areas of sea and sky. Both men, however, used the breadth and light of their pictures as settings into which to place human beings. Cuyp inhabited his compositions with large-scale foreground figures, while Van Goyen's skies and seas are settings for the figures, however small, sandwiched between them—environments which those figures shape and control. Nineteenth-century American landscapists, while using similar pictorial devices, were intent not only on suppressing human presence but on eliminating evidence of their own temperaments. They presented nature not for its associations—what it housed or what humans felt about it—but for what it was, in an art that might be said to have aimed at being wholly non-interpretive. Using nature for visual ends, for what it offered coloristically and composition-

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ally, they saw it as purely as they could, transforming that vision into entirely painterly terms.

The most dramatic expression of landscape in the years around the Civil War is to be found in the work of Frederick Church (1826–1900), who, although he was in many ways a more conservative painter than Kensett and Gifford, emphasized color in a way unique for his time. As befits a Cole pupil, he preferred grandiose nature in all its aspects, beginning by copying his master's *The Ox-Bow* (1844–46), which looks down from a wild promontory onto a striking natural phenomenon. By 1850, he was displaying the taste for spectacular meteorological manifestations that was to raise his preference for impressive nature to even higher pitch (*Twilight "Short Arbiter Twixt Day and Night"*) and allow him to develop the intense color harmonies he so favored. Twilight was a favorite time for him, and the intensity of flaming sunset clouds over a brilliantly colored and crystal-clear horizon one of his preferred subjects (*Sunset*, 1856, *Twilight in the Wilderness*, 1860). The melting light of Kensett and Gifford was not his; rather he preferred light that manifested itself as color—the sun diffused through clouds, spray, and mist, auroras and eruptions that fill the sky (and his canvases) with pattern and exotic hues. It was the great forces of nature that captured his imagination, and one senses behind it all a return to earlier moralizing landscape that makes Church a more European artist than his American contemporaries, not least in his ambitions. He nevertheless achieved something that none of the others did, a coloristic intensity that was to have echoes far in the future of American painting.

As the final quarter of the nineteenth century approached, it became apparent that American painting was taking a new course, influenced by radically new ideas. Although some artists, Bierstadt and Moran among them, continued the native landscape tradition, largely in the west where they could work on a vast scale and free from disturbing new conventions, many more turned to France and to Impressionism for their guidance. The figure reappeared, paint application became broad, thick, and noticeable, local color returned, and interest in light was transformed into an interest in light striking and defining figures, or light expressed directly as it was reflected by pigment, not atmospheric light or color *as* light. Homer's Impressionist scenes led him to ever freer facture, Eakins troweled his paint onto his canvases, Eastman Johnson chose cranberry pickers working in the sun for a subject, their forms developed in light and shade, their clothes providing accents of color. Each looked to France for guidance, or went there to be trained, and in so doing evidenced his desire to compete with the most significant painting of his time. Accordingly, American painting took a qualitative leap forward, the first of several that were eventually to bring it to the front rank of world art. Regarded from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, American landscape painting of 1850–75 seems a limited and provincial art, qualitatively inferior to what followed it. To say that, however, is by no means to disparage its accomplishment, nor to deny the fact that the mid-century

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landscapists produced a powerfully native art for the first time, an art rooted deeply in that of northern Europe—England, Germany, and seventeenth-century Holland. This foundation underlies all of American painting, and if the qualitative accomplishment of that painting is unthinkable without regular catalytic infusions from France, its international flowering clearly derives from the galvanic effect of those infusions on a native northern sensibility. What the nineteenth-century landscapists accomplished was in this respect remarkably prescient. In dissolving traditional pictorial structure altogether, not simply inventing new relational systems, as Analytic Cubism may be said to have done, or bringing color and form to the surface of the canvas, as Synthetic Cubism may be said to have done, they anticipated by a century some of this country's most fecund pictorial devices. Similarly, Church's vast color baths look forward to effects that, however much they may owe to Matisse and others, are clearly anticipated by him. Although American nineteenth-century landscape may not have been directly influential on the art of Abstract Expressionism and its successors, the deep affinities between certain aspects of the two schools demonstrate the continuity of sensibility that forms the foundation upon which the greatness of American painting has been built.

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Reviews

JAMES FINN COTTER

Outer and Inner Poetry

AT THE RIPE OLD AGE OF EIGHTY-TWO, Eugenio Montale has written another book of poetry that casts a cold eye on life and death.[1] The 1975 Nobel Laureate has made no effort to deepen his vision or freshen his response: his is the dry statement of things as they are. Not reality but his own emotions made objective—"a passion that has become a thing"—make up the poem. "Poetry (*in Italy*)" sums up his aesthetic perspective:

> Since the beginning of the century
> we have been discussing whether poetry is inner
> or outer. At first inner won,
> then the outer counterattacked furiously
> and after years they have come to an agreement
> which won't last for the outer is
> armed to the teeth.

By "inner poetry" Montale refers to the Romantic and Symbolist movements which he rejected and by "outer poetry" he indicates his own modernist (via Eliot) style which sees the poet as commentator on the "tragic mess" of the age. Punning on *fuori* ("outside") and *furore*, Montale defines that detachment as controlled indignation, Juvenalian in its origin, which fashions his verse. In "Eulogy of Our Times," he mocks a world where men "kill with art" while works of art last "for the space of a morning." Contemporary man has learned all the wrong things. Biographers reduce the memory of the great to trivial information (here "Henry James/tasted *crêpes suzette*"), while the mass of people ignore their achievements. Memory should spring not from the mind but from the free gift of life itself: "Memory / is a wick, the only one left us." The poet remembers to feed the pigeons at his windowsill when in the vast sky birds are being netted and shot. "I Have Scattered Birdseed" concludes with the bleak thought of all the dead: "We've done our best to make the world worse." Montale finds the thought of death sad, but eternal life frightening. Better to remember the dead, as he does his wife Mosca, with small talk than to try to imagine "the inhuman." In "All Souls' Day," his housekeeper has lit a candle for the departed who are no longer close and whose memory is fading. "In My Early Years" observes with irony that the poet can recall his dog more clearly than he can his neighbor. "The Elephants" pictures

[1] IT DEPENDS: A Poet's Notebook, by *Eugenio Montale*. Trans. by *G. Singh*. New Directions. $12.95; $4.95.

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the care with which two elephants bury their calf while the audience, watching them on the screen, already begins to laugh at the next sequence. Montale warns that like the animals human beings are an endangered species. He offers no advice, refuses to moralize, but simply sets the evidence before us, like Vermeer, whom he admires, or those mourning elephants.

In his first volume of poetry[2] since the Pulitzer winning *Collected Poems* of 1978, Howard Nemerov sounds another bitter note about the contemporary scene, its religion, politics, sexuality, and culture. The opening poem, "Literature," announces sarcastically that it is "in good hands, it is being written / by liberated sex maniacs, psychologists," social-worker novelists, and disgraced politicians. Nemerov's image for this productivity is garbage and excrement. In "Walking the Dog," he reflects that both master and pet share "Our interest in shit," although the dog's sense is keener: "And just to show who's master I write the poem." Nemerov is at his best with this threading of the literary into the ordinary; the direct epigrams without imaginative setting, on the contrary, seem as loose as those of late Frost. Unlike Montale, his lack of locked-in objectivity results in cynicism rather than satire. Even his artistry unscrews when he ends the twenty-five line sentence of "The Dying Garden" with the words: "Somber November in amber and umber embering out." The line not only attempts to out-Hopkins Hopkins but topples over into nonsense verse. If the Middle Ages, God, museums, glossy magazines, and even death all take their lumps, the poet still manages to retain his sense of decorum and form. In "Monet," for example, he tells how, unable to get into a crowded exhibit, he spends Sunday morning in the park, looking at waterlilies blooming in the filthy water. At such moments, Nemerov transforms his disappointments into objects of art: the despair of insomnia or a turkey buzzard over a nursing home make visible an unseen order. "The Makers" praises the first nameless poets who "spoke the speechless world and sang the towers / Of the city into the astonished sky." The five-part "By Al Lebowitz's Pool" traces, as Monet did his cathedral, the shifts of light and change in one familiar place, wondering: "Could we reflect, did water not reflect?" One of the joys in reading Nemerov is his verbal skill—words like "analemma," "clerisy," and "flarepath" come to mind—it's too bad to see "conoisseur" and a few other errors in my copy.

Robert Watson's *Selected Poems* in 1974 showed a variety of styles and attitudes that set him in the front ranks of poets of wit and substance, the qualities of traditional outer poetry. As commuter, subway-rider, moviegoer, breadwinner, lover, and artist, he embodied something in all of us but glimpsed in a glass darkly or brightly distorted. In his new book of poems[3] he proves to be just as irrepressible, surprising the reader with some outrageous fantasy or contortion of the commonplace. Watson tints his humor with gray-flanneled disparagement; he is the bystander who takes no risks, yet remains observant, caring, and eloquent beneath his fa-

[2] SENTENCES, by *Howard Nemerov.* University of Chicago Press. $8.95.
[3] NIGHT BLOOMING CACTUS, by *Robert Watson.* Atheneum. $10.00; $5.95.

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cade. "A Childhood Friend Embezzles Five Million" celebrates a classmate who dared to make his illusions real, while "Get Back Into the Closet All of You And Fast" spoofs the latest liberated fads and longs for the days when "kiss" and "thigh" had meaning. Sex meets its match in "You Didn't Feel Much, Did You?" and the author pokes fun at an affair by mail in "Please Write: Don't Phone." Despite some of his overdeveloped titles, Watson rarely descends to cute silliness; he is serious in his madness and comic in his moral acumen. In "Lost," he offers a succinct parable of the search for identity and anonymity that should inspire the individual in today's global village. How do you lose your life in order to find it in a fishbowl? "Repossessed" captures the weird drama of self-declared bankruptcy as a way of life that brings freedom and rebirth, an ironic reversal of our moneyed dreams. Watson deserves a wide audience for his strange originality, inventiveness of style, and down-to-earth intelligence. Creating his own freedom, he never abuses it.

Tom Wayman presents himself as everything Watson is not, yet they are opposite sides of the same coin. In this selection of poems,[4] we meet him as unemployed drifter, factory-worker, job-seeker, teacher, and poet. His poems about working on a truck-assembly line reverberate with kinetic energy: people linked by their devotion to machinery, by friendship, weariness, and talk. Wayman makes unlikely words ring: forklift, hooters, eyebolts, grilledensers, and air-cleaner cutouts; he brings his speakers to life: Neil, Larry, Andy, Bill—each with a story to tell of a broken and patched-up life. "The Death of the Family" chronicles a tale of women who forever walk out and men who always manage to start over. "Violence" authentically echoes the hard-hat attitudes of those who answer force with force and who cannot comprehend the author's appeal to nonviolence. In the poems that follow, Wayman quits his job, works as a building-wrecker, quits again, drifts and drives, teaches, reads his poetry—all the time listening to others, falling in love, fixing his car, and writing. In a poem about a man named "Garrison," the poet mirrors himself when his friend asks: "Who needs us? I mean / I think maybe this is the first time / people like us have been really useless." Not if poetry like the lines describing Vancouver are the result: "The Blue Hour" presents a cityscape worthy of Hart Crane or Carlos Williams and "D.: Eight Poems" ends with an elegy that is stunning in its accurate description of vacant streets. "Egg City," on the other hand, provides a bizarre tour of a chicken factory that is Kafka-like in its nightmarish realism. Wayman also writes about his grandparents, his Jewish roots, and his new Canadian-American family, "just ourselves." "Friends Logging" relates a conversation with fallers and chokermen who fill his room with logs of fir and hemlock as they talk into the night. In such verse Wayman appears a true successor of Whitman and the Beats, one who is his own man speaking the truth of his experiences. Occasionally, his style slips into neutral with sliding verbiage ("get some beer / or something") and vacuous platitudes

[4] INTRODUCING TOM WAYMAN: Selected Poems 1973–80, by *Tom Wayman.* The Ontario Review Press. $10.95; $5.95.

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("Over the decades / people have also tried religion and class, / race and the tribe").

Reaching for the limits of outer poetry, Ernesto Cardenal touches the perimeter beyond which stretches endless propaganda. Without quite passing that boundary, he astonishes by daring to push poetry to its limits. Cardenal, a Catholic priest and Marxist revolutionary, became the Nicaraguan Minister of Culture after the collapse of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979. His longer poems have now been translated (the others appeared in 1975) and they date from 1954 to 1979.[5] The best known is the earliest, "Zero Hour," a poetic manifesto that reviews a century of capitalistic exploitation of his homeland. The American reader will be better off beginning with "Trip to New York" which covers known territory: Watergate, the Berrigans, Doubleday and Gotham Bookstores, the *Catholic Worker*, St. John the Divine, and, always in the background, the death of Thomas Merton. The six-day visit offers more than a Cook's tour, however, for the poem gives us a panorama of the activist movement in its last fulgent years. It is no coincidence that the opening lines describe the city from the plane circling the sunset sky. "Epistle to Monsignor Casaldáliga" addresses a Brazilian prelate arrested for his subversive activities; a brotherly, Christian spirit sustains the love and anger that inspires the poet to protest: amid the "mass production of misery," he wonders "what use are metaphors if slavery is not a metaphor?" The poet must turn to the "language of everyday, which is also that of poetry." "Nicaraguan Canto" offers Cardenal the opportunity to describe plants, trees, and rivers, to imitate birdsongs, and to detail the lives of the villagers: "This is the land I sing. My poetry belongs here, / like the trumpeting *zanate*, or the wine-producing palm." The final poem, "Light," sounds a note of hope with echoes of Teilhard de Chardin and a vision of a unified world moving toward a just sharing of earth's gifts. The introduction is thoroughly helpful, but the endnotes identifying people mentioned in the poems tell us nothing we do not already know.

Artur Lundkvist's *Agadir* deals not with political upheaval but with an actual earthquake.[6] On March 1, 1960, the resort city of Agadir on the coast of southern Morocco was completely destroyed and most of its 40,000 inhabitants perished in the pre-dawn quake. Ominous calm marks the first part of this book-length poem: a dove, helicopter, and locusts loom in the air like omens, while the sea threatens below, "rolling in heavy and greasy, black ground-swells under silvery skeins of spit." Even a fish carried in a plastic bag seems a portent when "the fish became transparent, revealing a network of blood vessels / like fine lines of red ink." We learn how to read those lines later as the Swedish author and his wife go out to contemplate the ruins where people wander about like mummies in the "dust rust-stained with blood." Like Dantean travelers,

[5] ZERO HOUR and Other Documentary Poems, by *Ernesto Cardenal.* Ed. by *Donald D. Walsh.* Introduction by *Robert Pring-Mill.* Trans. by *Paul W. Borgeson, Jr., Jonathan Cohen, Robert Pring-Mill,* and *Donald D. Walsh.* New Directions. $12.00; $4.95.

[6] AGADIR, by *Artur Lundkvist.* Trans. by *William Jay Smith* and *Leif Sjöberg.* Ohio University Press. $10.95; $5.95.

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they encounter a fifteen-year-old bride whose husband has died, a man whose wife drowned in a bathtub, and a baker buried in the rubble. A German couple, immune to the chaos, clean, cook, and sun themselves in their exposed apartment. Voices speak out of the shattered city, some declaring: "God was nowhere around" and others confessing: "God made his presence known" by uniting the dead to himself. The most memorable scene occurs soon after the disaster when the shivering survivors gather on the beach, seated back to back for warmth, "this human community, beyond languages and races, in speechless waiting." Every nationality is represented in this obvious allegory—made explicit in the final lines—of "the greater destruction" man has prepared for himself in nuclear holocaust. Written shortly after the experience, this strong and unusual poem has an immediacy of emotion which rivets the reader's attention and makes us grateful that it is available in a fine translation.

Richard Eberhart's *Collected Poems 1930–1976* offered a needed retrospect of one of the most thoughtful of our outer poets, an old-fashioned moralizer in a relativistic universe. His new collection of poetry[7] continues his major concerns with nature and language, love and fate. Eberhart compares himself to his grandfather, an itinerant preacher, his "arms flailing at ultimate questions, / Unanswered, the questions of man" ("Angels and Man"). In "Love Sequence with Variations," a ten-part poem, Eberhart assumes the lecturer's stance—it is difficult not to do so, he explains—and discusses sexual freedom and repression, passion and divorce. Consciously didactic, the poet only begins to hold us when he leaves his lectern to praise the papermakers who made it possible for poets to compose: "Who can love enough a page of Keats?" he asks. He then pays tribute to Hopkins who "gave us his poems // shining in reality like the life of his Master." Eberhart also recalls Williams writing *Paterson*, lunching with the Sitwells, and offers two elegies on Robert Lowell. These poems could not be improved upon, so well do they identify with their subjects and present, in Hopkins' words, "the very make and species of man." Less fortunate are what I take to be a parody of Stevens and Spender in "The Play" and the quotation from Keats in "Autumn." Satire here smacks of sour grapes. When Eberhart draws his lessons gracefully, as he does in "A Snowfall" and "Learning from Nature," he interprets man and environment in a legitimate literary tradition. When he focuses attention on driving across country, eulogizes Robert's *Rules of Order*, or recounts the grotesque treatment of Coleridge's bones, he enriches our sense of the pattern in the absurd. When, finally, he delineates the behavior of gnats and a fat spider, the color of quarry stone and the call of a loon, he expresses "the subdued joy" hidden in everyday existence and revealed in the palimpsest of poetry.

In her third book of poems,[8] Constance Urdang encounters the outer worlds of one's country, other people, and one's own body. From within,

[7] WAYS OF LIGHT: Poems 1972–1980, by *Richard Eberhart*. Oxford University Press. $11.95.

[8] THE LONE WOMAN AND OTHERS, by *Constance Urdang*. University of Pittsburgh Press. $9.95; $4.50.

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she reaches out to the limits of her dreams and fantasies. In "Portrait," for example, she pictures herself as a trespasser in her own house, "my own alter ego." She is a stranger to her dog, to a rude woman in a grocery store, to her childhood. She sums up her dilemma in "Missouri" when she ironically observes: "Even inside, I'm an outsider." "The Brother Poems" offers sharp detail and focus, recalling Thanksgiving dinners at home, a secret clubhouse, a dead friend, and her brother today, hiding "Inside this fat uncle." She waits for him now to jump out and declare "it was only a joke, / He didn't really mean it." Of course, the brother mirrors everyone, including the poet. As "The Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island," she lives like an anchorite and wild woman, "no longer daughter, sister, mother." A strong feminist viewpoint underlies two series of prose poems, "Artificial Illuminations" and "Reinventing America"; both employ surrealistic comments on real events, private and public. The four poems on "Family Life" also juxtapose the ordinary and the imaginary, aligning real memories of relatives with gothic fiction. A clear eye for comedy keeps their purpose in perspective. Urdang can write matter-of-factly about the most intimate thoughts, as in the poem,

BEING A WOMAN

I have resented the woman in the
woman, having to be her, sitting
in the bathtub surrounded by
herself, resented
breasts, hips, buttocks,
resented flesh itself, womanflesh,
wanting to go incognito
without ornaments or emoluments
abstract as a grassblade
as a piece of straw

This sense of alienation spreads outward; it drives people into the suburban grasslands, a flight well sketched in "In the Suburbs" and "Safe Places." "The Foreigner," a poem about a nervous tourist trying conversation in a café, captures the plight of the displaced; "Baked Potatoes" reminds us that even back home we can be absent: "As if back there it is all going on, without me." Perhaps "The Kites" most graphically telescopes the experience of being-outside when the kites, the children holding them, and the observers "inside / windows," all fly aloft with astronauts, satellites, and stars.

Marcia Southwick's first book of poetry[9] begins with story-dreams and fables, but halfway through the volume we realize that, like Dante in the center of the earth, we have turned upside down: we have left outer poetry and are into the inner kind. The river, grass, stones, birds, and horses

[9] THE NIGHT WON'T SAVE ANYONE, by *Marcia Southwick*. University of Georgia Press. $8.50; $4.50.

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of the first poems have existence only in the poet's imagination as she creates archetypes in the lost child, her shells, dolls, and rocking horse, figureheads on a ship that has lost its way. In "The Marsh," the poet listens to the crickets but feels "left out of the landscape," finding no explanation for the things she has discarded: driftwood, fish skeletons, and shells, "remnants of a past life / I can't possibly understand." "Winter Gulls" forcefully measures the distance between people after uncovering the distance between her own mind and nature. With "Dusk," however, the poet begins to accept her limitations. A mature wisdom emerges in the final poems: "No Such Thing" reflects that "what you are is never quite as permanent as silence / or the granite sky." She concludes that "you must accept a part of yourself / in which your name is a foreign word" for which you have no translation. Southwick complains—and the reader can sympathize—that she is tired of thinking about herself and speaking to the empty night. "The Vanishing Street" maintains that there is no real present, just an arrangement of outside events. The descent into solipsism seems complete in "The Burning Calendar" when she says that there is no end "to my turning inward." Rescue comes in time when she discovers that "in my poems I can step out of myself / long enough to say that my blood is *a symbol* for pain." Although she cannot fix herself definitely, the poet can see herself as part of the changing world.

Richard Tillinghast's title poem, "The Knife," from his second collection of poems,[10] uses a dramatic, archetypal image: his brother diving into a river to recover a knife, a leap into prehistory and return:

> Now I call to him
> and now I see
> David burst into the upper air
> gasping as he brings to the surface our grandfather's knife
> shaped now, for as long as these words last,
> like all things saved from time.

The knife is symbolic of the poem which exists outside because it has been snatched from oblivion. In his personal voice, Tillinghast makes drinking a cold bottle of home-made beer, seeing one's family after a power failure, a cattle charge, and a protest march, fixed moments of epiphany. His free verse is rhythmic, sensuous, and subtle when he wishes to convey an insight trapped in some object and set free. His use of the alter-ego, however, appears contrived when he switches from third-person to first in "Return" and when he projects Mao-Tse-tung as a revolutionary muse in "Today in the Café Trieste." The poems "after" Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Rilke strike me as ventriloquist feats—highly literary ones—rather than as acts of inspiration. Yet in many poems Tillinghast possesses the art of a Hiroshige in depicting water, fish, boats, trees, hills, and light. An oriental economy shines in his choice of details: "Right up against gran-

[10] THE KNIFE AND OTHER POEMS, by *Richard Tillinghast.* Wesleyan University Press. $10.00; $4.95.

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ite, / saplings springing up through snow" ("Aspens and a Photograph") and in his ardent response: "A new life breathes in the world— / fragile, radiant, / unused to the ways of men" ("Hearing of the End of the War").

In his most recent book of poems,[11] Robert Penn Warren explores the world of growing up by developing traditional allegories through his individualistic style. A masterly poem, "Speleology," narrates his journey into a cave at age twelve; almost losing his flashlight and his way, he probes deep inside the darkness to his own selfhood: "*This is me.*" "October Picnic Long Ago" describes his mother's joy in family and nature, a typical and uniquely precious day perfectly illuminated in the poem. "Boyhood in Tobacco Country," which employs heavily Romantic diction ("darkling I stand," "Oh, grief! Oh, joy!"), deliberately contrasts with the plain phrasing of poems on local funerals and old railroads. Running at night along a California beach, walking for two days in a blizzard, chatting at a cocktail party, Warren dramatizes the *kairos* of vision which was too often missed: "Can it be that the vision has, long back, already come— / And you just didn't recognize it?" Putting himself down, the poet at times makes it difficult to distinguish parody from purple patches. "Swimming in the Pacific," for example, sinks in its own hyperbole, inversions, and mannerisms. Fustian wins out in alliterative lines like: "On the beach flat I fall by the foam-frayed sea." Self-mocking or not, some poems sacrifice recognition for rhetoric. Without providing enough surface detail, the poet sometimes masses material to probe some inner meaning. Warren succeeds when he pairs off insight and style, as he does in "The Moonlight's Dream," "The Only Poem," "Snowshoeing Back to Camp in Gloaming," and "Preternaturally Early Snowfall in Mating Season." Some poems have a Hopper-like atmosphere of light and shadow, liaisons and loneliness. In "On Into the Night," the poet lies down in a dark wood, listening to the animal sounds recede until only the heart beats: "In merciless repetition, declares // Its task in undecipherable metaphor." The poem records the exact image (or cardiogram) for itself.

In the title poem, "Bazaar," to her first collection of poems,[12] Susan Wood places her main themes in their exotic setting. With "tales of / lovers, opium, bruises, mothers, death" as the wares she has purchased from other women, the poet turns them over and over in her poetry, mixing memory and desire. In "The Snow Dome," she imagines her life inside a paperweight "where I've learned to dream of nothing / outside myself." She admits: "Such limits / have their imperfections," but she prefers "the consolation / of pure loneliness." Broken glass occurs as a symbol of the shattered self; mirrors break when you try to walk through them. Wood writes frankly about a woman's desire for a man, for men, and she presents herself as a woman with everything to lose. "Necessity," "The Disappearance," and "Learning to Live Without You" are among the poems that speak of the pain of absence; "In a Field, In August" mov-

[11] BEING HERE: Poetry 1977–1980, by *Robert Penn Warren.* Random House. $8.95; $4.95.
[12] BAZAAR, by *Susan Wood.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $10.95; $5.95.

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ingly frames the moment of departure. What the poet says to her lover in "After You" mirrors her own situation: "No one will ever love you enough." Wood also writes affectively about the dead, her grandmother and a sister who died at birth. In "Red Dust," a photograph album opens a window into the past which is fully visualized in the present. She uses the same technique with paintings of Edvard Munch, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Helen Frankenthaler. In "The Rest of the Story," after quoting Joan Didion on how we tell ourselves stories in order to live, Wood sadly reflects that life reduces itself to very little, to an old Persian rug (the past again) that someone pulls out from under our feet. "This isn't the life you meant / to have, though sometimes it almost / makes you happy," she concludes in "As It Happens." Wood makes a little go a long way in these candid, discerning, and articulate verses.

In her new volume,[13] Louise Glück views poetry as word sculpture, a child's drawing, or a porcelain bowl. "This fear, this inwardness," envelops the poet, but she gives birth in an inhuman world to a spoken word: "*bear*: you give and give, you empty yourself / into a child. And you survive / the automatic loss" ("Autumnal"). Although "everything is bare," the woman-bearer offers her child-poem to the light. In "Illuminations" and "The Gift," she describes her actual son speaking his first syllables, "entering / language," and calling a dog to the door, "welcoming each beast / in love's name." Absence in death also haunts these poems when, like Wood, Glück summons the memory of a dead sister. "Descending Figure," in three parts, evokes her presence, pictures her as a museum painting, and imagines her in the earth. "Tango," on the other hand, addresses a sister who lived, a separate partner who shared the real and dream worlds of girlhood. Glück divides her book into sections, "The Garden," "The Mirror," and "Lamentations," which thematically treat death, marriage-life, and wording one's grief. "World Breaking Apart" finely allegorizes the poet's shaping art, like wind molding forms in snow; "a mind's shattering released / the objects of scrutiny." Nonetheless, the scattered particles make up a whole vision, obscure, apparently useless, yet comprehensible. "Lamentations" traces the story back to a lost Eden, the first couple, and a God leaping into heaven whose breathtaking vantage point ends the book.

To introduce the Welsh poet Leslie Norris, his publishers have issued a selection of poems drawn from three previous collections.[14] Like Eberhart, Norris writes effectively, but more subjectively, about the dead. "Elegy for David Beynon" commemorates a former classmate who as a teacher perished with his schoolchildren in the avalanches at Aberfan. "At the Publishers" remembers C. Day-Lewis and "A True Death" Vernon Watkins; both poems speak to the heart. The poet invokes the spirit of Edward Thomas in "Ransoms" and "A Glass Window" with an affinity for the landscape that seems closer to the older poet than to Dylan Thomas

[13] DESCENDING FIGURE, by *Louise Glück*. Ecco Press. $9.95.

[14] WALKING THE WHITE FIELDS: Poems 1967–1980, by *Leslie Norris*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $9.95; $5.95.

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who is only briefly mentioned in "A Reading in Seattle." Norris also writes fine poems about ordinary people: "Three Men" surveys the lives of a singing shepherd, a black man, and an old codger of eighty. "Drummer Evans" conjures up the eccentric teacher who gave lessons in kettledrums to the abashed young poet; "Early Frost" recalls the time his father thawed him out after a freezing walk home. "October in the Lane" also describes his returning in snow when, "in a falling minute," he became "a seven-year-old, white-haired man." Many good poems communicate an inner feeling of life close to the earth: the blasts of winter wind, the smell of wild garlic at night, summer heat and rain, and oak leaves falling. "Now the House Sleeps" reminds us that beyond the silent darkness "rough trucks grind / The highways, gears ripping blind," their headlights flashing like "Plato's shadows on the wall." "Barn Owl" tells of finding an owl, keeping him for six months, and letting him go: "He lifted slowly / Over the Hughes's roof, his cream face calm, / And never came back." "Skulls" takes us on a climb to a cliff where the poet discovers a graveyard of ponies' skeletons: "I had / Surprised them in their old / Deaths." Norris surprises his readers with his firm grip on mortality and the things of this world.

In David St. John's second book of poetry,[15] memories open to memories, conversations echo earlier talks, and landscapes blur into other scenes so that everything is held within parenthesis within parenthesis. In a single word lie many meanings; the conclusion of the title poem, "The Shore," for instance, gives us "wake" as rousing from sleep, watch over the dead, and waves drifting into distance. The mind spins and, however disoriented one may at first feel, experiences the poetry as a centripetal force. Ironically, the content often whirls with centrifugal motion as everyone slips away, former spouses, lovers, parents, friends. Even the poet's son, the one stable character in the book, is temporarily "left" for someone else. While there are just a dozen poems in all, the longest one, "Of the Remembered," contains ten sections which, unfortunately, do not sustain the original impulse. Poem II successfully puts the scene in the Sierra mountains, recalling an earlier visit when the poet buried a fallen squirrel, then speaks of his repeating the story to his son who interrupts him by pointing to a dead seal, and at last the poet becomes distracted by remembering a saxophone player holding "a single low note" one night in a bar. What a performance! The poem wanders with the daydreamer and its lack of seeming order keeps the reader fascinated. Although St. John protests that he tires of emblems, they pop up everywhere: a solitary die found on the beach or a photograph of a white wolf in snow. When he focuses on such objects for scrutiny, the poet's verse rises to the occasion, but too often it bursts off into a kaleidoscope of jumbled impressions. "Every voice I hear / Within my own," he admits in "The Boathouse," "remains a saying so / Lost to its history."

Inner poetry need not cause claustrophobia, as Philip Booth has proven

[15] THE SHORE, by *David St. John.* Houghton Mifflin. $10.00; $4.95.

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in five distinguished volumes of poems. His latest[16] projects the alter-ego into the figure of Odysseus, an old man returned to his tall house and faithful wife. The situation allows the poet-wanderer to ruminate on mortality and to ready himself for death. As Noam (Noman), he finds himself in a hospital after being struck by a car; he is attended by a nurse, and he comes back home. There, at night, he dreams of his Circe in the form of a young woman who, in fact, runs the local store by day. Just as the *Odyssey* includes singers in its own narrative, so Booth characterizes poets like Lowell, another Odysseus come up from the sea and greeted by an old worn-out dog. Booth handles his mythopoesis with such skill that the under-thought only emerges gradually and, while remaining meaningful in themselves, particular poems complete the imaginative biography. Out of "nothing" (a word repeated often), the fullness of a life crystallizes, defining its own limits and shining with a light that radiates from within and from all sides. The author proclaims: *I write what I can; / I didn't become / a poet for nothing.*" Another voyager, Thoreau, becomes the subject of a poem based on his *Maine Woods*; it details places visited, people met, books read. Of course, Thoreau "thought back to the *Iliad*, and Homer" while he traveled "the farthest east / he ever sailed" ("Thoreau Near Home"). Booth did not become a poet for nothing and we are the beneficiaries when we listen to the voice raised against the void of not-being, blessing existence, and giving thanks for life; when "we let words raise us / by their power," he reminds us, "we hear / our language validate our lives."

Since the publication of *Field Work* in 1979, Seamus Heaney has gained an audience that extends far beyond the narrow Irish turf he has staked out as his subject matter. His first four books (but not, alas, *Field Work*) have been republished with a few omissions and a volume of prose issued simultaneously.[17] Heaney's writings about poetry display a healthy knowledge of himself, a keen grasp of his craft, and a catholic taste in other authors. Despite the fact that they are an omnium-gatherum of lectures, radio talks, articles, and reviews, the essays resonate with a unity of purpose and tone that makes for agreeable reading. The poet approaches his own work and that of other poets, like Wordsworth, Yeats, Kavanaugh, and Hughes with critical principles and an open-ended curiosity. Although some repetition is inevitable, we enjoy seeing the same mind tackle different subjects for various audiences. A lengthy, incisive appreciation of Hopkins, for example, contains more insights in a paragraph than one finds in reams of scholarship. The brief review of Lowell's last book of poems sent me back to read it with fresh understanding. What Heaney says of Roethke holds true of his own efforts: "An awareness of his own poetic process, and a trust in the possibility of his own poetry, that is what a poet should attempt to preserve"; this intelligent faith inspires Heaney's dedication to poetry. Beckoned by place and time to be

[16] BEFORE SLEEP, by *Philip Booth.* Viking Penguin. $12.95; $5.95.

[17] POEMS 1965–1975, by *Seamus Heaney.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $12.95. PREOCCUPATIONS: Selected Prose 1968–1978, by *Seamus Heaney.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $15.00.

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a writer of outer poetry—he was born and brought up a Catholic in the Protestant North, then pressured to become a spokesman for the Catholic cause—he made the hard choice to move to the South in order to continue the inner search for the archaic and personal continuity of song. In "Feeling Into Words," he explains how an early poem, "Digging," helped point the direction downward and inward which he needed to take as a poet; just as the generations of potato diggers before him had picked up the spade, he used his pen. Here his idea of "poetry as revelation of the self to the self" first fused with the metaphor of archaeological discovery so that poetry becomes a dig for finds in the subconscious psyche. In "Englands of the Mind," Heaney relates this formulation to Eliot's notion of "the auditory imagination" which penetrates "far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling" to return to the origin with a revealed word, like Tillinghast's "knife," Glück's "bear," and St. John's "wake." For Heaney, that word's full potential, as he notes in a review of Stevie Smith's poems, is "enhanced and amplified in its power to move once we know the characteristic tone and rhythm and texture of the poet's physical voice." One hears that voice in these stanzas from "First Calf":

> Somewhere about the cow stands
> With her head almost outweighing
> Her tense sloped neck,
> The calf hard at her udder.
>
> The shallow bowls of her eyes
> Tilt membrane and fluid.
> The warm plaque of her snout gathers
> A growth round moist nostrils.

One must pause at the word "about," get its adverbial force, and go on reading with this broken rhythm. Heaney observes in "Belfast": "Certainly the secret of being a poet, Irish or otherwise, lies in the summoning of the energies of words. But my quest for definition, while it may lead backward, is conducted in the living speech of the landscape I was born into. If you like, I began as a poet when my roots were crossed with my reading."

In his poetry, Heaney contrasts country speech with the language of the struggle-torn city. "Whatever You Say Say Nothing" sums up the attitude of citizens bombarded by explosives and public jargon: "escalate," "backlash," "polarization," and "long-standing hate." The poet savors "fodder," "peat," "marshlights," and "Mossbawn," the name of his first farm. The "soft gradient / of consonant, vowel-meadow," the language of landscape, shapes verses with strange titles like "Anahorish," "Toome," and "Broagh." With no prairies to explore, he says in "Bogland," "Our pioneers keep striking / Inwards and downwards," not to coal and minerals but to wetlands of buried forests and men. The excavations of the Norse "bog people," sacrificed bodies from the Iron Age, provide Heaney

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with an allegory for the present Troubles. "The Grauballe Man" depicts the prototypal victim whose "wound / opens inwards to a dark / elderberry place," and "The Tollund Man" views a corpse as a slain "Bridegroom to the goddess." "Bog Queen" identifies woman's share in the same ritual fate: "My body was braille / for the creeping influences." Heaney often assumes a woman's voice, as in "Undine," "The Wife's Tale," "Mother," and "Shore Woman." Wood- and water-sprites, the Mother Goddess, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, his own mother and wife embody the creative *anima* and the shadow side of death. These themes, techniques, and music continue to grow through the four volumes published here. The early use of rhyme seems wholly predictable and even the experiments appear self-conscious. "Mid-Term Break" starts off as a record of a wake but in its attempt at plainness terminates with a clever twist. The poet's gifts mature in his sketches of farmers, roof thatchers, and fishermen working by day or lamplight. His poems on the renewed civil war and the British occupation, with interrogations ("Seamus" is a suspicious name) and killings, remain those of a reflective non-participant: "I am neither internee nor informer; / An inner émigré, grown long-haired / And thoughtful." Irish or otherwise, we all gain by that inner emigration, out of self to abide in self. Outer or inner, poetry shows the way.

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THOMAS R. SMITH

Writing on Written Lives

SINCE ONE OF OUR ENDURING LEGACIES from the nineteenth century is the idea of evolution, it is perhaps inevitable that, at some point, the history of a literary genre would be presented on the model of the evolution of a living species. The superficial similarities between the categories of genre and species encourage the application of organicist ideas of development to literary history. Also, if literature is alive as a registration of experience, then that life should have a history of its own, and evolutionary theory offers a convenient explanatory model for the changes in structure and function that literary forms undergo. In *The Forms of Autobiography,* William C. Spengemann has applied the evolutionary model to the history of autobiography, aware that he is employing, in fact, only an extended analogy between two very different classes of things.[1] Nonetheless, Spengemann trusts the scientific mode of historical explanation to provide a conceptual framework strong enough to support his account of autobiography's development from a primal ancestor, down through three subspecies, to its present dispersal among many other genres.

Spengemann posits St. Augustine, whose *Confessions* we are told contain all future possibilities for the genre, as the common ancestor of all autobiography. He resolves Augustine's book into three autobiographical modes: the historical (Books I–IX), the philosophical (Books X–XII), and the poetic (Book XIII). The historical mode, or "self-biography," is a chronological accounting of the events of one's life from a vantage point quite different from that occupied while experiencing them, as if the record were written by someone else. Augustine's successors in this mode occupy the period from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century; Spengemann's examples are Dante's *La Vita Nuova,* Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners,* and *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin.* Flourishing around 1800, the philosophical mode uses autobiography to search for the true nature of the past and present self about which one writes; the illustrations are Rousseau's *Confessions,* Wordsworth's *The Prelude,* and De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* and his other autobiographical writings. The poetic mode, at its peak later in the nineteenth century, enacts dramatically the exploration for a stable self and uses various literary forms to involve the reader in the search; Spengemann instances Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus,* Dickens' *David Copperfield,* and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter.* He admits that his modes overlap the periods to which they are assigned, places Franklin and De Quincey as transitional figures at the ends of periods, and denies that his ten writers consti-

[1] THE FORMS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre, by *William C. Spengemann.* Yale University Press. $19.50.

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tute a family group or form what he calls a "unilinear" descent from Augustine down to Hawthorne. Rather, in his words, they "illustrate most clearly what seem to me the crucial episodes in the larger movement that is my subject."

Spengemann's history is extremely schematic. With Augustine as the "formal paradigm," the literary historian presents readings of nine autobiographies that link each one to a specific mode of the paradigm, and to the other illustrative texts in the book. There is a place for everything mentioned in this history, and everything is in its place. The problem is that much has been left out of the demonstration. Spengemann's aim is "to describe the movement of autobiography from the biographical to the fictive mode," and though he rightly says he "does not pretend to survey the vast library of autobiographical writing," he has surveyed it well enough to choose ten texts that we must take on faith to represent that library. Though Spengemann acknowledges exceptions to his categories of period and mode, he has produced a closed critical system in which the phenomenon he seeks to explain—the changes in autobiography from Augustine to the nineteenth century, and by extension to the present—is reduced to a series of relationships among the texts of ten writers. These texts, and the often illuminating comparisons Spengemann makes among them, become a synecdoche for the phenomenon to be explained and the only source of evidence about the whole for which they stand as part. It's hard not to accuse this slice of literary history, ostensibly modeled on a scientific theory dependent on empirical evidence, of preselecting its data to produce the results the theory prescribes and explaining what does not support it as best it can.

Spengemann's readings and the history of autobiography they illustrate describe what he sees as the cutting edge of the genre's development. Because he is always concerned with the vanguard of the form, the word "autobiography" is often used to refer only to forward-looking changes in rhetorical aim and structure. For example, when discussing how the language of autobiography in fiction ultimately refers to the self in spite of its explicit textual references, Spengemann subsumes his subject, the "larger movement" of the genre in time, into his scheme:

> It is perfectly true that the allegorical tenor of autobiographical language becomes more noticeable when self becomes a mystery to "memory and conjecture" and available only to the imagination, when autobiography gives up trying to explain the self historically or to discover it philosophically and attempts to reveal the self in fictive metaphors whose explicit referents are not events from the writer's own past life.

One can agree with the point here and still question why "autobiography" is made an agent, as if it were a spirit residing for the historical moment in the fictions of Carlyle, Dickens, and Hawthorne. Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century autobiographers did not give up "trying to explain the self historically or to discover it philosophically." Spenge-

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mann knows this but suppresses the knowledge until the very end of the book, where in one sentence he consigns those writers who persist in believing in an "unconditioned self" to one of his three Augustinian modes, where they do not contribute to the genre's evolutionary advance. Can a history of autobiography that putatively classifies over a hundred years of its subject into preexisting forms really be doing justice to that vast library of autobiography?

Whatever my misgivings about the book's conceptual scheme, Spengemann's readings of individual texts are for the most part models of clear, concise description, and he includes a detailed, seventy-five-page bibliographical essay that students of the genre, whatever their response to the book, will find useful. His longest and best chapter, on St. Augustine, lucidly examines how the last four chapters of the *Confessions* undermine its narrator's initial assumptions about faith, knowledge, and truth. Throughout Spengemann's readings the distinction between narrator and protagonist is kept much sharper than many writers on autobiography often care to see it. Typical of the ease with which Spengemann makes revealing comparisons among his texts is this passage on Franklin and Rousseau:

> Equating his reputation with the truth about himself, Franklin sought to align himself with society by portraying his life as an example of publicly acknowledged values. Rousseau, on the other hand, means to correct his reputation by persuading society to abandon its characteristic hard-heartedness and sympathize with him. In an equally important sense, of course, Rousseau's desire to remake society in his image does not differ fundamentally from Franklin's hope of persuading society to imitate his own rise to success and Reason. It simply makes explicit the radical individualism that Franklin's acceptance by his public had enabled him to disguise as a lesson in social conformity.

Spengemann's readings of *David Copperfield* and *The Scarlet Letter* are carefully done. He does not mechanically derive the elements of Hawthorne's artistic personality from Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth. Rather, he locates characters in Hawthorne's other stories and expressions of desire in the *Notebooks* that support a reading of the tale as allegorical of warring impulses in the artist. By so doing, Spengemann makes a strong case for seeing all of Hawthorne's work as an autobiographical project.

In *The Scarlet Letter,* Spengemann's Hawthorne is the first to express the idea that the self is "continually reshaped by efforts to explain, discover, or express it" and thus is the last to be able to write Augustinian autobiography, defined by its assumption of a self unconditioned by experience. Spengemann sees the continuing, and it is implied, futile effort after Hawthorne to fix the self in the poetic or fictive mode of autobiography as the "poetic self-invention" omnipresent in modernism. By this account, all modernist writing is implicitly autobiographical when not explicitly

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so. And since its developmental energy has dispersed into other genres, the genre of autobiography has ceased to evolve and therefore may be considered defunct. This is an inevitable conclusion of Spengemann's Augustinian perspective, but it leaves many questions of classification unanswered. I would like to see Spengemann go on to demonstrate how his three paradigmatic categories adequately account for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century autobiographies he would exclude from his fictive or poetic mode. Would they all comfortably fit into the historical or philosophical?

Many of the contributors to *Women's Autobiography* would take issue with Spengemann's estimate of autobiography as a moribund genre.[2] They see it flourishing. This well-organized collection of essays is devoted to the proposition that since women's lives are radically different from men's, it is inappropriate to apply to women's written lives the traditional critical standards derived largely from men's autobiographies and promulgated mostly by male critics. The generalizations about women's autobiography proposed as evaluative criteria are roughly these: while men's autobiographies stress public and professional lives, tend to idealize childhood, and consciously shape the past into chronological narratives unified around one theme, one period of life, or one aspect of personality, women's autobiographies are concerned with personal feelings and private life, tend to be objective about childhood, consistently understate the importance of the writer's experience and writing, are usually anecdotal and fragmented, without narratives that impose a unifying shape to the whole, and are often cast into the subgenre forms of the diary, journal, and notebook.

Many of the essays deal with the self-images—low, middling, and high—that women's autobiographies display. Explaining the quality of the writers' self-esteem by their place in the community, and the nature of that community, these essays are often more sociological in intent than literary. But when attention is paid to society as readers or audience, the autobiographies become more interesting in their own right. For example, the editor, Estelle C. Jelinek, examines the paradoxes that arise when successful professional women write autobiographies for audiences who expect them to conform both to their public image and to the images of supportive wife and loving mother. Her essay on Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Eighty Years and More* discerns an interplay between the "ordinary woman" and the "exceptional person" that Patricia Meyer Spacks specifies in different terms as almost a hallmark of women's autobiography: "the identity of public performance may cause its female possessor to experience intensely, or . . . to reveal emphatically, pre-existent uncertainties of personal identity." Spacks's penetrating essay on the autobiographies of Emmeline Pankhurst, Dorothy Day, Emma Goldman, Golda Meir, and Eleanor Roosevelt shows how these writers use their self-sacri-

[2] WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: Essays in Criticism, ed. by *Estelle C. Jelinek.* Indiana University Press. $25.00; $9.95.

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ficing public roles to shield themselves from the disappointments or confusions of their private lives.

Writing on Lillian Hellman's *An Unfinished Woman* and *Pentimento,* Marcus K. Billson and Sidonie A. Smith confront the question of the limits of the genre, contending that, despite their focus on the external world, memoirs constitute autobiography proper on the Freudian and Lacanian grounds that "the memorialist's vision of the outer world is as much a projection and refraction of the self as the autobiographer's." They discover in Hellman's writing a mirroring process of self-recognition through identification with a series of significant "others." Presenting portraits of these people becomes a strategic narrative technique of self-presentation that allows Hellman to balance her fragile sense of self with the integrity of those she portrays.

Using feminist criteria to judge the quality of recent women's autobiography is the explicit aim of several essays that close this collection. The matriarchal archetypes of Venus, Artemis, Demeter, Kore or Persephone, and the Primal Great Mother inform Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos' powerfully analytic study of the autobiographies of Margaret Mead, Hellman, Maya Angelou, and Maxine Hong Kingston. Demetrakopoulos comes close to evaluating these four books solely on the degree to which their presentations of women conform to matriarchal archetypes and her ideal of "matrilinearity." Mead's life, rather than her book, is praised since it "demonstrates that one need not separate from the matriarchate in order to develop, to self-actualize fully. . . . " Though Hellman's autobiographies are "satisfying aesthetically," the figure of her that emerges from them is found wanting because "the devouring faces of Hellman's matriarchate" cause her to lose touch "with her feminine roots of ongoingness and continuity."

Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is taxed even more severely on these grounds. Demetrakopoulos asserts it "fails precisely because it does not face squarely and reconcile in any way the distorted faces of the matriarchate." While she demonstrates the usefulness of archetypal analysis for understanding the relations among women in these autobiographies, Demetrakopoulos unfairly stretches them on the rack of her own need to see complex, positive matriarchal relationships. Thus it is not surprising that Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* is lauded as "an exceedingly rich book" that "lends itself to interminable analysis."

The low value that the male autobiographical tradition places on fragmentation and diffuseness is countered squarely by Suzanne Juhasz, whose essay on Kate Millet's *Flying* and *Sita* and Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* makes an eloquent case for Millet's absolutely private, documentary, diary-like style and for Kingston's fictionalizing her experience through the Chinese stories told in her family. Millet gets another close look by Annette Kolodny, who contends that *Flying,* far from being formless, has its own internal organizational principles that its critics' outmoded expectations of autobiography have blinded them to. Kolodny's interpretations of the shifting meanings of *Flying*'s imagery may aid read-

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ers who up till now have found the book excessively personal and self-indulgent. Juhasz, Kolodny, and others demonstrate that recent autobiographies by women are generating criticism capable of illuminating them for the rest of us, and show that such autobiographies and criticism are not so wholly divorced from traditional or "male" practices as some of the contributors to this collection insist. By firmly opposing the impatient application of critical standards derived from older autobiographies by writers of both sexes, *Women's Autobiography* helps us to take all autobiography for what it is, not for what it is not.

James Olney's collection of new and previously published essays on autobiography covers a wider range of writers and issues than does *Women's Autobiography*.[3] Because some of the theoretical essays call into question the assumptions and procedures of the rest, the book embodies a split in current thinking about autobiography. On one side are practical critics and essayists confidently inferring facts about writers' selves from the evidence of their autobiographies; on the other side are theorists who are skeptical of the self traditionally discerned in autobiography. Though this kind of disagreement on fundamentals is nothing new, the issues it raises are particularly sharply drawn by a consideration of autobiography since the self is at the heart of the matter.

To take the skeptics first: Louis A. Renza in "The Veto of the Imagination" argues that autobiography, far from being akin either to imaginative fiction or to history, is a "unique, self-defining mode of self-referential expression . . . that allows, then inhibits its ostensible project of . . . converting oneself into the present promised by language." He describes autobiography as a chimeric daydream "that at first seems recordable, but then, when the attempt is made . . . eludes the word"; it is an "endless prelude" to itself, a "fragmentary incomplete literary project," an "arbitrary document" that necessarily fails to achieve the kind of total communication autobiographers hope for, since readers have no way of verifying the writers' account of their experience. Measuring the autobiographies of St. Augustine, St. Teresa, Franklin, Rousseau, and Henry Adams against the ideal of full self-representation he claims all autobiographers hope to achieve, Renza finds that their written lives fall short of this ideal because of the inherent discrepancy between the "explicit 'dummy' ego"—the "I" of the text—and the continuously changing self engaged in writing. No one would dispute that such a discrepancy exists, but Renza magnifies this fact of language until he arrives at the Zeno-like paradox of autobiography's promising then preventing perfectly complete self-representation. The arrow of autobiography, looked at by Renza, can never reach its target. As can be said of Zeno's teasers, this impossible state of affairs is a function only of the way the problem is conceived.

Michael Sprinker is similarly dubious of the ability of autobiography to

[3] AUTOBIOGRAPHY: Essays Theoretical and Critical, ed. by *James Olney*. Princeton University Press. $28.50; $9.75.

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reveal the self. In "Fictions of the Self: The End of Autobiography," he understands subjects, authors, selves, and texts in a Foucaultian way: they all articulate the discourses surrounding them. Sprinker surrounds himself with texts by Vico, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Freud that he reads autobiographically, in some cases appropriating their arguments as his own, in others turning them back on themselves. The essay's central text is Nietzsche's *The Will to Power,* published posthumously by Nietzsche's sister from his notes. The book is Nietzschean although Nietzsche himself was not at all responsible for its publication. Sprinker sees in this situation an illustration of the book's point, a denial of the ego. Nietzsche's contention, "The fundamental false observation is that I believe it is *I* who do something, suffer something, 'have' something, 'have' a quality," is accepted at face value by Sprinker. Who wrote the book then? The will to power itself, say Nietzsche and Sprinker.

This insight and Foucault's Nietzschean dissolution of the author underlie Sprinker's readings of Vico, Kierkegaard, and Freud, in whose texts a self anterior to the act of writing cannot be found. Thus Vico's *Autobiography* is less about his life than about the work leading up to, the writing of, and the revising of the *New Science,* and Vico's assertions of intellectual originality are expressions of his theory of history as repetition with minor changes; Vico can legitimately claim to be original since he knows he inevitably repeats his precursors with only slight differences. The case of Kierkegaard is more complicated. Sprinker wants to keep separate the Kierkegaard who pseudonymously published *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling* from the Kierkegaard who published under his own name, since the latter refused to accept the words of the former as his own even though he acknowledged legal authorship. Sprinker defines the pseudonymous Kierkegaard as multiple subjects in a shadowy place between the pseudonymous author and Kierkegaard as reader of that author's work. Before thus trusting the teller rather than the tale, though, Sprinker has weakened his argument by taking *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling* to refer obliquely to Kierkegaard's breaking off his engagement to Regina Olsen. As an axis around which to array his discussion, that fairly straightforward autobiographical reading would seem to posit Kierkegaard's touchy refusal to accept those books as his own as simply a defensive aside.

Sprinker uses Freud both as autobiographer and theorist of the self. In *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Sprinker sees Freud resisting the act of interpreting his own and others' dreams beyond a limit specified early in the text, thereby leaving his theory and autobiography repetitive and unable to avoid merely confirming itself in its own terms. Freud's discourse becomes for Sprinker an exemplary instance of the reflexiveness of autobiographical inquiry into the self: both are "always circumscribed by the limiting conditions of writing, of the production of a text." Such a limit to analysis of self and autobiography confirms, in Sprinker's eyes, the assertions of Vico, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche that "the self is constituted by a discourse it never completely masters." Autobiography, like dream in-

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terpretation, returns to the center of the self in the unconscious and there discovers that the self was "already there when it began." Thus, Sprinker concludes that "no autobiography can take place except within the boundaries of a writing where concepts of subject, self, and author collapse into the act of producing a text." Denis Donoghue asked the right question about this conclusion in *The New York Times Book Review*: "But if there is an act, mustn't there also be an agent? And, if so, aren't we back where we started?" His answer, that we may be more scrupulous about using words like "self" and "author," is good advice.

Two other contributors to Olney's collection raise questions about autobiography's relation to its materials, the self and the act of writing. In "Eye for I" Elizabeth Bruss, like Sprinker, links autobiography necessarily to writing, but for a different reason. The failure of films like *The 400 Blows* and *8½* to be experienced truly as autobiography, she contends, results from film's dispersal of the roles of author, narrator, and protagonist into the irreconcilably separate functions of director, camera, and actor, in contrast to those roles' conflation in written autobiography. This scattering of agency among various people involved in filmmaking blurs autobiographical intentionality for viewers, who are placed in the position of passive spectators of a visual world constructed not by the single vision of the autobiographer, but by the many vantage points of the camera, the director, the actor, and the screenwriter. Bruss is doubtful that autobiography can survive the ongoing translation of written narratives into film and video, but sees the popularity of those new modes of communication as expressing something about our relations to each other that writing does not, and perhaps cannot do.

Returning to the written word, we find James M. Cox speculating intriguingly about the self Thomas Jefferson presents in his *Memoirs,* which Cox tries to revive for literary study by stressing Jefferson's insistence on reproducing the original text of the Declaration of Independence in his book and his nearly complete identification with the public history of Virginia and the United States. Cox's Jefferson is a creature of the pen, whose autobiography can be seen as a series of public documents and acts. As a critic of autobiography, Cox puts into practice the idea of a self constituted by discourse that Renza and Sprinker call for.

The essays in Olney's collection that proceed on more conventional assumptions present a selection of some of the best writing on autobiography of the last twenty-five years, as well as several new essays representing recent work. A wide range of critical interests and approaches is offered: reader-oriented criticism by Barrett J. Mandel, American studies by Robert F. Sayre, black studies by Roger Rosenblatt and Paul John Eakin, women's studies by Mary G. Mason, stylistics by Jean Starobinski, comparative and rhetorical analysis by William L. Howarth, and psychological criticism by Olney himself. Olney has done all students of autobiography a service by translating into English Georges Gusdorf's essay on the conditions and limits of autobiography, which has been a springboard for many writers on the subject since it was first published in French in 1956.

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And by including Germaine Brée's wonderfully clear introduction to Michel Leiris's life and work, Olney has helped those long mystified by Leiris and his commentators.

This collection of essays will reward all who seek it out. The essays, all chosen with care, debate among themselves the questions of autobiography's relations with other genres, how to draw boundaries around the genre, and how to arrange the material within the boundaries into meaningful classes. If autobiography is indeed a thing of the past, as some of the writers I have dealt with maintain, its death does not mean that interesting and often provocative writing about autobiography is finished, too. By the looks of things, it is just getting started in earnest.

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GEORGE KEARNS

Fiction Chronicle

I REMEMBER ELIZABETH BOWEN when she came to my home town, it must have been on her first American lecture tour in 1951, to speak to the Assembly of a local college, which meant, as I recall, attendance required. Wearing thick red tweeds, right for an Irish country house, a bit heavy for an overheated American civic auditorium, she was introduced by a Dean or Chairman, then rose to speak, but first: "Before we hear Miss Bowen, let us rise for the Pledge of Allegiance and our National Anthem." She stood at attention through the Pledge, but the Anthem presented a problem: clearly she didn't know the words, and clearly she had come to a rapid decision that her American audience might find it rude if she didn't join in. And that's how I remember her, on the stage of an auditorium in Bridgeport, Connecticut, gamely moving her lips to *The Star Spangled Banner.* My embarrassment and sense of superiority to the provincial occasion were immense. When at last she spoke, it was with a staggering stammer. By that time she had almost stopped writing short stories; pressed for money, she turned increasingly to lecturing, teaching, and to well-paid American journalism with pieces such as "For the Feminine Shopper" (*Holiday*), "The Case for Summer Romance" (*Glamour*), and "How to Be Yourself but Not Eccentric" (*Vogue*). It may have been some of that journalism that made me begin to think lightly of Elizabeth Bowen. Certainly her *Collected Stories* are a great surprise, a treasure house of pleasure and mystery;[1] even in the less successful of the seventy-nine, those that retain a "magazine" touch, some of the ghost stories and the Saki-like tales of Wise Children, there is always some fineness of phrasing, some shrewd observation (how could she have known so much?), and the strong evocation of place that is her signature.

She wondered, in a manuscript she was working on at the time of her death in 1973, why people showed so little curiosity about the places:

> Thesis-writers, interviewers or individuals I encounter at parties all but stick to the same track, which by-passes locality. On the subject of my symbology, if any, or psychology (whether my own or my characters'), I have occasionally been run ragged; but as to the *where* of my stories, its importance in them and for me, and the reasons for that, a negative apathy persists. Why? Am I not manifestly a writer for whom places loom large? As a reader, it is to the place-element that I react most strongly; for me, what gives fiction its verisimilitude is its topography.

Note the faint scorn for "symbology," of which there is little in her work,

[1] THE COLLECTED STORIES OF ELIZABETH BOWEN. Introduction by *Angus Wilson.* Knopf. $17.95.

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and for "psychology," of which there is plenty, although she was a much better writer for not thinking of it as that. As I return to these stories for a second or third look, it is seldom the incident or the characters that I remember; I don't find myself saying, there's Davina or Agatha or Paul; but, yes, that table, that room, that house, that garden, that deserted bar in an ambiguous road-house, the lounge of that seaside Irish hotel. Yet if you look to see how she achieves particularity of place, you can hardly discover the art, it has been done with so few touches, such rightness of selection. Here are no Balzacian pauses encyclopedically to "do" a room, a neighborhood. Here are no "settings" against which the characters act out some plot: the places *are* the people, define their lives and present conditions, take their *quidditas* from the lives lived within them, and what a Bowen story is often about is some fine registration of harmony or dissonance between person and locale. Her rooms are never shut in; there are usually windows that extend the view to the surrounding landscape, and we have a sense of the whole house within which the room is situated, and of the placement of the house within its park or town.

Character, for Bowen, is not uniqueness of personality, but a tangle of habit, situation, manners and class. There are codes everywhere, stable and unstable, and people are supposed to know by breeding, intuition, or luck, how to read them. Yet the intricacies of code never quite accommodate their lives, are always violated; something has gone just a bit wrong, not only within each story, but within the larger structure of the relatively comfortable classes of England and Anglo-Ireland. The money that supports those rooms and houses also comes in relative degrees of stability; what one was bred to, what one somehow expected, isn't always there. "Caps touched to them in the village could not console them for the letters they got from their bank." The stories are often about young men and women who must look for suitable marriages; wives trapped within marriages because there is no place else to go; poor relations; and people who live precariously at the edge of the comfortable classes, like Miss James, a hard-working dancing-mistress who goes round the room "congratulating the mothers of little girls who had danced nicely. Governesses she did not congratulate; she was too tired." To watch Bowen's England move through three decades is to observe almost imperceptible changes through a series of little shocks, as money, manners, and sexual behavior shift and become less stable. In early stories, ladies still wear pince-nez glasses and are embarrassed when the wind shows a few inches of black stocking above their boots; poor young men are sent out to the colonies. By the mid-thirties neon and car-parks appear, and upper-middle-class ladies can find themselves, at least for an evening, on a social level with Miriam, the proprietor of a tea shop:

> 'I keep a tea-and-cake parlour called The Cat and Kettle. If you like cakes it's all right, but it puts you off them. . . . I've got check blinds and an inglenook and olde-oak beams and a cat; it's nice till you get used to it. I do Devonshire Teas at one and six and Dainty Teas *à la*

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> *carte*. I lose on the Devonshires, mostly; you've no idea how much a person can eat to spite you. . . . Every now and then my hand goes right out; I don't mind telling you, you could knock a man down with some of my gingerbread. But people would eat a boot if it was home made. They like getting caraways into their teeth and spitting out burnt currants; it feels like the old home. I've had customers drive thirty miles to see the dear old black kettle sit on the hob and kid themselves I made the tea out of it. . . . However, no times like the old times—Look in next time you're passing.'

A few years later we hear of a young man "picking up" a girl in a café, "with an ease combined with faultless propriety that left them both decidedly gratified." When the War comes, a servantless lady has some trouble answering the door: "It would have been remarkable if she *had* yet arrived at the manner in which to open her own door—which would have to be something quite different from the impulsive informality of peacetime." In one of the last of the stories, "Ivy Gripped the Steps," a man makes a nostalgic wartime visit to a closed house he frequented as a boy, and a vanished world rises before our eyes: a time when one learned history to see "how long it had taken to make the world nice"; when houses ran so well that one never heard the wealthy mistress giving an order; when you were met at the station by a porter who placed a foot-warmer under the fur rug; and in which there were people for whom

> the expenditures of their incomes—expenditures calculated so long ago and so nicely that it could now seem artless—occupied them. . . . A word to the livery stables brought an imposing carriage to any door: in the afternoons one drove, in a little party, to reflect on a Roman ruin or to admire a village church. In the Promenade's glare, at the end of the shaded avenue, parasols passed and repassed in a rhythm of leisure. Just inland were the attentive shops. There were meetings for good causes in cool drawing rooms, afternoon concerts in the hotel ballrooms; and there was always the theatre, where applause continued long after Gavin had gone to bed. Best of all, there were no poor to be seen.

Bowen was never taken in by this, no more than she would have been by olde-oak beams and a kettle on the hob; she had, from the start, too great a sense of what such surfaces cost those who were left outside and, for those on the inside, what price was paid in frustration and unhappiness.

Representative of the strongest of her stories are "Ann Lee's," in which two young matrons in a hat shop catch a glimpse of the passionate backroom life of its chillingly self-possessed owner; "Making Arrangements," in which a deserted husband rapes his wife by proxy, shredding a red dress; "The Dancing Mistress," one of Bowen's few stories about working, if not quite working-class, people; "Look at All Those Roses," in which a stranded motorist spends an afternoon with an isolated mother and her

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paralyzed daughter; and the wartime "Ivy Gripped the Steps." The singular masterpiece in these 782 pages, much longer than most of the stories and much less neat, is "The Disinherited," her most extended and unsettling study of the disintegration of morals and manners. *Collected Stories* is much more effective as a volume than as individual pieces. It has the cumulative force of a long plotless novel in which Elizabeth Bowen, everywhere present, difficult to identify, is the elusive heroine.

The strongest, best-written novel by a new writer I have seen for a very long time is Charles Coleman's *Sergeant Back Again.*[2] It has not, as I write this, received much attention, and it should not disappear into the oblivion of any category such as first novel, or even Vietnam novel. Coleman, who served as a medic in Vietnam and later in the mental wards at Chambers Pavilion, Fort Sam Houston, the scene of his book, tells us in a didactic Foreword:

> I did not *make* this story: it came to me that way, ready-made, defined by historical circumstances, generated by the soldiers who have had to fight the most insidious and intimate battle: the one with yourself. . . . In writing this book I am mainly a chronicler who was left no choice but to try to speak for the inarticulate, the psychically scarred, and the wasted. . . . It is a synthesis of personal experiences, observations, interviews, and journals here woven together into a narrative.

Elsewhere, in a press release, he says that the book began as a documentary, "but I discovered that distancing myself was more crucial than achieving exact chronology or unflinching accuracy. However [it is] the unvarnished truth." There will be readers who will not agree with me that Coleman has been completely successful in moving from documentary to drama, and who may share his own ambivalence about aestheticizing the experience. The crucial point may be the character of Mr. (formerly Captain) Pollard, a traumatized inhabitant of the Ward, whose long, articulate discourses on the meaning of Vietnam are "distanced" by Coleman's making him a Berkeley professor, an Asian scholar who sees that his work in Army intelligence in Vietnam has helped destroy the culture he meant to preserve. Perhaps Coleman would think it beside the point if readers either take or mistake Pollard as his spokesman.

The central figure, however, is not Pollard, but Specialist Andrew Collins, a medic who began deeply to identify with his wounded patients in Vietnam, worked with the ESR (Every Soldier's Responsibility, an antiwar movement), released to the Press documents about the torture and murder of prisoners, and wrote a series of letters addressed to himself by the voices of the American dead and wounded. The novel begins with Collins deeply withdrawn, muttering indecipherable phrases ("Sergeant back again"), and traces his return to a perilous sanity—a matter of *choice* the book suggests—so that he can return like Ishmael to tell the tale, just

[2] SERGEANT BACK AGAIN, by *Charles Coleman.* Harper & Row. $12.95.

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as Coleman is doing in speaking for the traumatized. Collins is not an intellectual like Pollard, but he is very intelligent; and Coleman brilliantly shows how madness does not cancel out intelligence, how the insane can be aware of their insanity, can retain a clear, even comic vision of the insanity around them. Collins is helped by a compassionate Army psychiatrist, Dr. Nieland.

> "Dr. Nieland. Wait! They're all true. Every one of those letters is true and accurate."
>
> "How do you know? Who wrote them, Collins? And who walked around the camp one morning trying to match someone's foot to someone's body like Prince Charming looking for Cinderella? While it rotted in the boot? . . . And who, Collins, loans *things* qualities only a living human being can possess? . . . But it is all tangled up with the others: the wounded, the dead, and the restored. Somewhere back there you drew a line through your own mind. You saw only the black and white and lost the tones—the grays. And as more dismembered, blown-apart bodies passed under you, the more fragmented your mind became, until the chasm between life and death grew too—"
>
> "How ingenious of you, Doctor. How very bullshit."

This is a very tough book, avoiding any trace of sentimentality or of reverse sentimentality. Its persistent comedy is justified in that the patients/prisoners themselves produce it and are aware of it.

The novel is constructed as a series of scenes in which the psychiatrists and staff, doing their best, attempt to help the patients by exposing them to "normal" activities—a softball game, television viewing, a party, a religious service, a T-group session. Each of these expeditions ends in disaster, for the patients' disruptive knowledge and energies refuse normalization or containment. In the funniest of the scenes, they are taken on an outing to the Alamo to be lectured at by a General's mother, a member of the San Antonio Rehistorical and Developmental Association and the Daughters of Texas Independence. The "rehistorical" lecture, too, ends in a frighteningly comic uproar. Coleman's scenes are never static presentations; he is a master of narrative rhythms, of allowing each scene to develop and to move unpredictably. *Sergeant Back Again* is a comic novel about evil without a villain, and avoids any easy irony (such as that the insane are really sane, that the officially sane among us are in fact insane, anything like that). I have not read all the books that have come out of the Vietnam War, but I can't imagine there will be one finer or more moving.

Walter Abish prefaces *How German Is It*[3] with an epigraph from Jean-Luc Godard, "What is really at stake is one's image of oneself," a remark any novelist (or poet) might use to signal to the reader that the work in hand may be *deeper* than it appears. Thinking about it after completing

[3] HOW GERMAN IS IT: *Wie Deutsch Ist Es,* by *Walter Abish.* New Directions. $14.95.

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Abish's ice-cold *tour de force,* his vision of contemporary Germany as the Air Conditioned Nightmare, is like finding a blank check signed with an unknown name: is it worth a small fortune, or a few dollars and change? That Godard's is not an unknown name doesn't help much; indeed, I think it's his name Abish is interested in more than his portentous remark, for *How German Is It* appears to be a homage to Godard, almost a Godard movie in prose, filled with distancing anti-illusionist devices: documentary passages, interviews, deadpan "readings" of still photographs, a police lecture on an antiterrorist film. The narrative voice probes the characters, the action, *Das Neue Deutschland* itself, with a thousand questions, some of which it answers, some of which it leaves sardonically suspended: "The question remains, do the Germans still expect to be asked embarrassing questions about their past and about their present and what, if any, ideas they may have about their future?" Reality itself is under interrogation by a voice that only lets on what it knows when it's to its own political advantage, a voice that plays at will psychiatrist, historian, documentary film-maker or sophisticated police investigator, and that can bully when it doesn't get the answer it wants: "*Next. . . . Repeat. . . . Answer. Answer immediately. . . . How different could everything be?. . . How different?*"

The immediate subjects of interrogation are the brothers Hargenau (once *von* Hargenau): Ulrich, a writer; Helmuth, a successful architect; and a widening circle of their wives, mistresses, friends, and business and political associates. Their father, a general, executed in 1944 for plotting against Hitler, is now seen as a hero, his reputation lending his children a somewhat ambiguous safety and prestige. Ulrich has returned to Germany after a cooling-off period in France: he has testified in court against members of a radical Left terrorist group of which he was a half-hearted member, drawn into terrorist plotting by his now-estranged wife, Paula, who is still, somewhere, a dedicated Ultra. The terrorists are out to get him, and he fatalistically endures their threatening calls and letters (including a marvelously sinister doctored-up coloring book) and their sporadic attempts on his life. The non-political Helmuth's career, too, is in danger, for the terrorists have taken to blowing up his buildings. Abish is at his best creating a sense of a society where paranoia is rational, a place in which one no longer knows what anyone else's political allegiances may be, nor whether those allegiances are to Left or to Neo-Nazi networks. The girl who moves into the vacant apartment upstairs; the old family retainer who turns up as a waiter in an expensive restaurant one frequents; a surly bookseller; the photo-journalist who arrives to do a piece on you and hangs around to sleep over; a simple bridge-tender; any or all may have terrorist connections. And knowing who's who is made more difficult by the disguises and temptations of radical-chic. Even one's brother may have set one up for an assassination attempt. When Helmuth makes an alliance with a group of scruffy motorcyclists, are we to suspect his politics or a careerist move to protect the buildings he designs?

On the fringes of the action floats the figure of Brumhold, an old metaphysician whose former apologetics for the New Order everyone would

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like to forget (Heidegger?)—as Abish's Germany industriously forgets, or better, only selectively remembers its past.

> On his eightieth birthday, shortly before his death, Brumhold had consented to an interview for the magazine *Treue,* on the condition that the interview be published only after his death. . . . No new revelations, no confessions, no regrets. Alert as ever, Brumhold had fielded questions regarding the resurgence of Nazism and the oppressive and nihilistic tactics of the urban guerillas by repeatedly saying that he was not in a position to talk about these matters. I live, he stated, in a log cabin I built many years ago in the forest. . . . I have little time left, and I try to spend it speculating about things that matter. In the entire interview and in the long accompanying article about him there was no mention of Brumholdstein, the community named after him.

Brumholdstein, the New City of which Helmuth Hargenau is leading architect, is a brilliantly realized landscape and metaphor, a savage epitome of *Das Neue Deutschland*: cleanliness, order, dependability, punctuality, culture organized in museums and concert halls, glass buildings, and mountains of luscious pastries. It is a site for deliberate forgetting, but the main point of Abish's novel appears to be a relentless refusal to allow Germany to forget. For Brumholdstein has been constructed over the site of a concentration camp; its sleek prosperity and numbed self-satisfaction are interrupted by the discovery of a mass grave beneath its main business thoroughfare. The tension of the novel, a taut novel indeed, is captured in that image—as Abish's merciless camera and sound equipment record the life of a whole people attempting to suppress a past that won't lie still, as they incorporate methodically the routinized violence of the present.

Abish is an artist of enormous resources and control, and *How German Is It* is a most readable book, not only for its bitter comic observation, but for a narrative drive propelled simultaneously by *what's going to happen?* and *what did happen?* The mercilessness of it spoils it for me, for there is a thesis guiding it, and that thesis demands that Abish rigorously suppress any extravagant energies, any complexities, any *life* within his characters, any sign that a German may have moments of sensibility (or folly) that don't support the thesis. We are familiar with this New Wave manner of observing slightly narcotized characters against "dehumanized" landscapes, but there is a difference between film and prose: in the movies there is the chance that the actor may supply some quirky and mysterious presence that may not be suggested in the desiccated script. But Abish has only his prose, and within that prose he won't (can't?) give his people or his "Germany" a chance. There is an unpleasant implied condemnation of a whole people which, not to press the point too hard, can't help reminding us of the very fault Abish won't let Germany forget. *Engagé* as all get-out, this deft writer (after a flashy *coup de théâtre* that would be "effective" in a film, but that belies the artistry on every other page)

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steps forward with his placard: "Is it possible for anyone in Germany, nowadays, to raise his right hand, for whatever the reason, and not be flooded by the memory of a dream to end all dreams?" What is really at stake is one's image of oneself *and others.*

Luis Rafael Sanchez's Puerto Ricans are even more programmatically limited to suit a vision of "all of colonized Latin America." *Macho Camacho's Beat*[4] is a two-hundred page demonstration that the Puerto Rican mind is flooded with junk language, junk American and European brand names, junk values, presumably foisted upon it by the colonizers and their running dogs among the politically and socially dominant classes of the island. There is no room for fineness, or real wit, or intelligence, unless we are to suppose it among some artists and *independentistas* who never appear in this stifling anatomy of stupidity. A gross Senator stuck in a traffic jam, trying to get to an appointment with his mulatto mistress; his ditsy society wife, waiting to see her psychiatrist; his worthless son, also stuck in traffic (in his beloved Ferrari: the old man has a Mercedes-Benz); the mistress and her idiot child; and her chum, Doña Chon, who *may* represent some sort of earthy wisdom. The son, says the dust jacket, is a right-wing terrorist; of course, there's no room in this book for *left*-wing terrorists. When we hear the following about the Senator's wife, we know at once what Sanchez thinks she *should* be concerned with, what she *should* read:

> She's read *Love Story* three times, she subscribes to *Vanidades*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *House and Garden*: for some time she's wanted to sink her teeth into something by Enrique Laguerre or René Marquès: people in our own backyard are God's children too: objective, democratic, well put together: if the backyard people weren't so pessimistic and tragical: forget slums, forget Puerto Rican independence, forget characters who sweat.

She turns to a "bewitching photograph of Liz and Richard in Puerto Vallarta," and we know that Sanchez will never allow her to read Marquès or to do anything out of keeping with his scheme. Nothing whatever happens in this novel; in that, it bears some resemblance to *The Man Who Knew Coolidge,* another long collection of degraded language and thought, but Lewis had none of Sanchez' gross virulence. The prose is studded with references to the author's own international culture—Sartre, Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, Neruda, Buñuel, Tennessee Williams—designed, I suppose, to place him within that culture and beyond his unfortunate image of his own island. There are many references to old Puerto Rican songs and performers (who, today, remembers Tongolele!), and, in the Spanish text, a prodigious use of Puerto Rican slang. The prose is annoyingly overly-inventive, elaborated from puns, neologisms, rhythmic riffs and allusions, but if Sanchez' hyped-up prose has its roots in Puerto Rican speech, Gregory Rabassa's virtuoso attempt to find English equivalents

[4] MACHO CAMACHO'S BEAT, by *Luis Rafael Sanchez.* Trans. by *Gregory Rabassa.* Pantheon. $10.95.

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for each twist and turn of the baroque text produces an unreadable non-language.

Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*[5] is a counter-demonstration. If Abish and Sanchez restrict their characters to accommodate politicized visions, Kundera's long conversation/meditation with exemplary anecdotes is about the inability of political systems to contain our desires, to control what we remember or forget, to suppress our ability to transcend the dark comedy of politics. Kundera's characters are avatars of himself, caught at one stage or another of Czech history from 1949 to the present. Often he simply steps forward as himself, as in a personal anecdote in which he remembers having been stripped by the State of "the privilege of working"; a journalist friend—this must be done with great secrecy—throws him a small job writing horoscopes. An order arrives from a "member of the highest Party committee dealing with hiring and firing [who] had ruined the lives of many of my friends," a man who had "spent half his life taking Marxism-Leninism courses." The Party official will pay a thousand crowns to have his horoscope cast, but of course this requires even greater secrecy, for he "wouldn't want it to get around he believed in medieval superstitions or anything. He just can't help himself." In Kundera's memory, this is a liberating bit of nonsense, even though in the mini-scandal that followed his friend also lost her privilege of working and Kundera himself went into the exile from which he now writes. Yet this dislocation in "the ostensible order of things (a Moscow trained Marxist who believes in horoscopes) makes us laugh," and laughter "has a certain malice to it (things have turned out differently from the way they tried to seem), but a certain beneficent relief as well (things are looser than they seemed, we have a greater latitude in living with them, their gravity does not oppress us)." If you hear an echo of another serious comedian of liberation, Roland Barthes, I think you're right.

There's a doubleness to everything Kundera does. His book is about forgetting in the sense that he won't allow history to dictate his works, nor to set the terms by which he lives; yet inevitably his writing is a public gesture, for if he is now, necessarily, writing for the West, he knows that in some future his fellow Czechs will need his books for remembering what their State has tried to erase from time. (Kundera's work has been removed from Czech libraries; he lost his citizenship for publication of this book.) He and his characters are caught in Czech history, their exuberant lives in counterpoint to "events": the excitement of 1949 when the Communists took power, promising "*an idyll, for all,*" supported by the cheers of "the more dynamic, the more intelligent, the better half"; then the reversal, as those "young, intelligent radicals started shouting to their deed, calling it back"; the Prague Spring, suppressed by the Soviet tanks of August 1968; then 120,000 Czechs going into exile and 500,000 others silenced and removed from their jobs, forced into internal exile. Kundera himself stuck it out until 1975.

[5] THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING, by *Milan Kundera.* Trans. by *Michael Henry Heim.* Knopf. $10.95.

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The funniest and most memorable of these anecdotes is "*Litost,*" an untranslatable Czech word that "designates a feeling that is the synthesis of many others: grief, sympathy, remorse, and an indefinable longing. The first syllable, which is long and stressed, sounds like the wail of an abandoned dog." After elaborate scheming, a student imports to Prague, for a night of sexual delight, his aging Phyllis, the object of pastoral passions. She is comically out of place in the capital, and suddenly her Corydon is in a farce situation; on the same night he has reserved for the lady, he is honored with his first invitation to the Prague Writers' Club, an opportunity to meet his literary heroes. The balancing act is funny and touching, for the abandoned country visitor is as impressed by the writers as is the student. The scene at the Writers' Club is wonderfully sketched: the student's *litost* at discovering the great men drunk and disorderly, not talking at all about the higher reaches of art, but concerned with their banal marital and sexual problems. It's a lovingly elaborated anecdote, and that brings me to a suggestion about how to read this *Book.* For "book" is what Kundera calls it, and I would be curious to know who authorized its appearance as a "novel." The publisher's copy too anxiously insists that the seven sections are connected, that the characters are *seemingly* disparate but "come together in unexpected combinations and disguises." Should we read: novels are taken more seriously, and sell better than collections of anecdotes and short stories? For our pleasure in this book is enhanced if we think of Kundera, here at least, not as a novelist, but as a *raconteur.* To do so relieves *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* of too heavy an obligation to stand up to scrutiny of its aphorisms, its charm and sentiment, its improvised semiotics, its café philosophy, authenticated only by the *raconteur*'s experience and his desire to liberate himself and his listeners as he tells his tales. (The translation by Michael Henry Heim is lively and transparent.)

About 1953, the Cold War blasting away, we read in *El Mundo* that the first Soviet ship since before the war, a ship on a "scientific" mission, had arrived in Puerto Rico. We went down to see what Russians looked like, walked through a gate out to the end of a pier, and stood there, about sixty feet from the Russians, waving and smiling. We could do that half an hour at a time; the Russians seemed to do it all day. It sounds dumb now, and it may have been—but so total had been Soviet isolation, so dark the grim veil through which we read about them, that we were amazed to see men who looked quite ordinary. We stared at their faces, their teeth, their haircuts, their shirts, anything for a clue about what it might be like to be *Russian.* We heard that the FBI carefully photographed our visits to that pier. Something of that same dumb curiosity remains: what else could have taken me through Alexander Zinoviev's sharp, but over-long, often rather specialized satire on the *folie à deux* of Soviet careerism and (private) moderate dissidence?[6] No big news here: a

[6]THE RADIANT FUTURE, by *Alexander Zinoviev.* Trans. by *Gordon Clough.* Random House. $13.95.

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self-serving bureaucracy stifled by stupid administrators; an apolitical youth; psychiatric hospitals for the more difficult "cases"; the privileges of the New Class (your vacation at the Central Committee Rest Home); etc. So one searches for minute gestures, just a hint now and again, of what it's *like* to live in Moscow. One learns: that a Soviet professor's position won't allow him to be seen walking home; that it's suspicious not to wear your medals to the office; that Moscow has lawyers specializing in alimony; how a foreign delegation is assembled, and how it copes with the KGB; that if you want to publish reproductions of forbidden modernist art, you might try accompanying them with a denunciatory text. If Zinoviev is as sprightly an inside observer as he seems to be, can that many people be so alike? Can life in a great city be so standardized and boring? The plot of *The Radiant Future* is a pretext, mainly, for monologues and conversations the biting comedy of which derives from the spectacle of intelligent people fine-chopping language and logic to accommodate their own scepticism to conflicting ideologies and histories, and vice-versa. The narrator, a slightly less successful academic than Zinoviev before he was stripped of his degrees and sent into exile, is trying to keep his career and outmoded liberalism afloat, although he's been denounced for "indulging in scholastic logicisation of the categories of historical materialism." It's a lost cause: "Anti-Soviet conversations like that are always going on in my home. And there's nothing I can do to stop them. And what is worst of all, I don't want to stop them and I even take part in them myself." The most persistent subject of conversation appears to be the character and works of Solzhenitsyn, open to an amazing variety of interpretations—one being that he managed to Get Through It All by being an informer.

Two novels and a collection of tales set in South Africa in the 1950s, in Japan during the War, and in the South Indian state of Kerala are more successful than Zinoviev in conveying a sense of real places in which people live out their lives. None of them is completely satisfying as fiction. *Tsotsi*,[7] an early "lost" novel by the playwright Athol Fugard, is an intense work set in a South African slum. The protagonist, a *tsotsi* ("thug" or "hoodlum")—he knows no other name—is a brutal leader of a small-time gang of murdering thieves; he has no past he can remember, no feelings, no conscience; his vision reaches no farther than the planning of each day's crime. Fugard attempts to convey the workings of this *tsotsi*'s mind as it moves from a brutish, atemporal condition toward the beginnings of "human" instincts, sympathies and conscience. The awakening begins with the discovery of an abandoned baby, whom the *tsotsi* instinctively refuses to let die, although he has no language to explain to himself why it should be kept alive. There are many strong passages: the deft murder of an Indian on a commuter train; a group of abandoned children living like a pack of marauding dogs; the *tsotsi* stalking a frightened legless beggar through the Johannesburg night, with an intent to kill. Fugard can hypnotize with his sense of place, and the condemnation of policies

[7]TSOTSI, by *Athol Fugard.* Random House. $8.95.

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that have created such a place is stronger for being left implied rather than lectured on. Yet his confining the action of the novel to six days presents me with something of the problem I have in reading classical French or Restoration tragedy—knowing that "unity of time" is a convention doesn't help. Fugard's attempt to bring his *tsotsi* from near-animal to man within so constricted a time seems unnecessarily artificial. For all its earnestness, *Tsotsi* is too realistic to work as fable, and too fabular to convince as psychology or tragedy.

The moral problem examined by Shusaku Endo in *The Sea and Poison*[8] might have provided material for Ibsen. The central figure, Dr. Suguro, a young intern in a Japanese hospital during World War II, is drawn into a plan to perform unnecessary experimental operations upon American prisoners of war in behalf of the Japanese military command. It is a comment on our times that as a moral problem it is at once complex and trite. Exactly where does individual responsibility rest when an immoral act, an atrocity, arises not from the mind of a single "evil" person, but from a multitude of interacting pressures: sheer tiredness and mental confusion, self-preservation, personal and organizational allegiances, confusing lines of authority, actions shared and endorsed by a "group" or by "society," patriotic appeals, and the difficulty of knowing in modern warfare or politics where the battlefield begins and ends. Dr. Suguro knows, or thinks he knows, as we often tell ourselves, that his solitary protest would be quixotic, that no action of his, no refusal to participate, will stop "society" or the "organization" from proceeding. Moreover, no one expected the operation to turn out so badly, for the prisoner has died. Endo's moral stance— the vivisection was *wrong*—is unequivocal. His young intern is only slightly less certain: "I shut my eyes in there today. I don't know what to think, even now. . . . Still, some day we're going to have to answer for it." A more cynical colleague replies: "Answer for it? To society? If it's only to society, it's nothing much to get worked up about." The point is clearer, I guess, when we know that Endo is not only a moralist but a devout *Catholic* moralist who is, I gather from a long, informative article on him by Garry Wills,[9] an acknowledged follower of Mauriac. At my most Catholic I was never moved by Mauriac, although I could recognize his power, nor by the "Catholic" Graham Greene, to whom Endo is often compared—but I *tried.* Yet many readers and theatergoers find dramatizations of such moral dilemmas important and moving. For me, *The Sea and Poison* is interesting for the odd experience of seeing the War through Japanese eyes, and for glimpses of life in wartime Japan and after.

We've been hearing a lot about "canonicity" lately, which can sometimes be translated as: will I be expected to know about that? Nothing is less likely to find its way into an American canon than Vaikom Muhammad Basheer's *"Me Grandad 'ad an Elephant,"* three novellas written in Malayalam, a language spoken by twenty million people in South India,

[8]THE SEA AND POISON, by *Shusaku Endo.* Trans. by *Michael Gallagher.* Taplinger. $8.95.

[9]*New York Review of Books,* February 19, 1981.

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and taking for their subject life among a Muslim minority of Malayalam speakers.[10] Muslim life in Kerala is a good distance from ours; moreover, Basheer's storytelling appears untouched by Western methods of shaping fictions, of pacing, of tone, and to read him is to enter another world. (As, for example, Anita Desai's neat, accomplished Westernized way of writing about modern India is not.[11]) Basheer's language is simple, often in the present tense, probably one stage removed from a tradition of oral storytelling, but his sophistication plays over and under the language in a gentle irony. One senses that his immediate audience finds mimetic pleasure in these tales, as if seeing in a mirror their familiar customs, foods, marriage and family codes, economic conditions. If so, that is our good fortune, for it allows us to walk into a fully realized world, necessarily as tourists, yet not excluded from the charm of this civilized, pre-industrialized society. (I'm not suggesting that it's always charming to the people of Kerala, where code-pressures and subsistence are not easy.) Whenever something from *our* world turns up in these stories—a taxi, a gramophone, modern hospital equipment—there's a little shock of surprise: we may have forgotten we're in the twentieth century. A random sample, as invitation or warning. A lower-class girl has been "taken up" by a richer, more modernized neighbor:

> That night she thought about it. Why wasn't she educated? Lying on the mat, she asked bapa [father] through the darkness, 'Bapa . . . why didn't you send me to school?'
>
> Bapa just sighed. Umma [mother] said, 'Are you asking why we didn't send you to school to become a kafir [heathen]?'
>
> If you learn to read and write . . . and if you are well-informed . . . it is not possible to live like a Muslim! Is this true?
>
> The next day Kunjupattumma asked Aisha about it. Aisha laughed! . . . 'Look,' Aisha said, 'Muslims should be well-informed. Those who are ignorant are *hamkin*. Are Muslims ignorant?'
>
> Is a Muslim a silly ass? Kunjupattumma knows well that he is not. Yet . . .
>
> 'Shouldn't we act differently from kafirs?' she asked.
>
> They should distinguish themselves from kafirs.
>
> 'That's right,' said Aisha. 'When a kafir walks with his feet, a Muslim should walk with his head. A kafir takes a bath and brushes his teeth, so a muslim shouldn't do either . . . '

Basheer, a much-honored writer in India, is now in his late sixties. There is an interesting introduction by R. E. Asher, and Asher and the co-translator, Chandersekaran, were wise to leave the flavor of Malayalam words in the text and to supply a glossary. The volume is very nicely designed,

[10]"ME GRANDAD 'AD AN ELEPHANT," by *Vaikom Muhammad Basheer.* Trans. by *R. E. Asher* and *Achamma Coilparampil Chandersekaran.* Edinburgh University Press. n.p.

[11]CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY, by *Anita Desai.* Harper & Row. $11.95.

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and by contrast reminds me how routine and unattractive most American book design and production have become.

Many of the books I've been looking at are amusing in their degrees, their comedy ranging from sweet to sharp, from affectionate to unpleasant, but it took Samuel Beckett to make me laugh out loud. Recently Eugène Ionesco paid tribute to Beckett as a writer suffering "*de notre condition existentielle, de la situation métaphysique de l'homme*" amidst the "*malaise fondamental d'être dans le monde et toute vie est souffrance. Les animaux eux-mêmes souffrent: l'univers entier est souffrance,*" and so forth. How profoundly off the mark that sounds, a vocabulary dispersing like the hot air it is, as we bring it into the vicinity of a Beckett text like the recent *Company*,[12] so busy laughing at any trace of pomposity that slips, as inevitably it does slip, into the endless discourse: "Can the crawling creator crawling in the same dark as his creature create while crawling?" Oh, no he "could not conceivably create while crawling in the same create dark as his creature." One even suspects that Beckett has read, or has heard about, the solemn post-modernist blather about his work inevitably arriving at Silence, and has set out to take it apart. Silent? Why, the old boy is positively garrulous, going on for fifty-seven pages. *Company* is unmistakably a *summa*: together with his first book, *Proust* (1931), it gives us all the general direction we'll ever need for reading him. He, Beckett, for this is the most autobiographical of his works, is *in extremis* of course, on his back in the dark, listening to a voice telling him little stories about himself, the best of which is a wonderful set-piece about a youthful act of charity to an aging hedgehog. The one on his back in the dark is the "devised deviser devising it all for company," for no matter how you try you can't do without company, which means that you have to *be* company, even at the expense of "a certain mental activity."

> But it need not be of a high order. Indeed it might be argued the lower the better. Up to a point. The lower the order of mental activity the better the company. Up to a point.

With glorious self-mockery he reviews his career, the painstaking ingenuity that went into imagining all those extreme situations, all that boredom—ever remembering that it has to be "entertaining in the long run"—for some version of himself, call him M (Molloy, Murphy, Malone), or W (Watt), or leave him Unnameable. "Last person I. Quick leave him." Should he be supine, allowed to move a hand, to crawl? And if he crawls, what adventures might he have? "The possible encounters. A dead rat. What an addition to company that would be! A rat long dead." The voice in the dark whispers to him (listen, Ionesco), "You do not murmur in so many words, I know this doomed to fail and yet persist. No. For the first personal singular and a fortiori plural had never any place in your vocabulary."

[12]COMPANY, by *Samuel Beckett.* Grove Press. $8.95.

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Company is Beckett at his clearest, his most "classical"—you could trace a line from Racine if you wished—and at his most lyrical, although the lyricism as always must win its way through elaborate obstacles, hovering on the edge of a silence that has nothing to do with "post-modernism":

> Some soft thing softly stirring soon to stir no more. To darkness visible to close the eyes and hear if only that. Some soft thing softly stirring soon to stir no more.

A Beckett scholar tells me she understands *Company* "will be his last." Maybe, but I wouldn't bet on it. As one of his voices says elsewhere, "Nothing like breathing your last to put new life into you."

Notes on Contributors *(continued from page 320)*

ROBERT SCHULTZ* teaches English at Cornell University. He has published a book of poems, *Vein Along the Fault.*

DOROTHY ROBERTS has published three collections of poetry; her work has also appeared in various American and Canadian journals.

VICTOR BROMBERT is Henry Putnam University Professor at Princeton. His most recent book, *The Romantic Prison,* was awarded the Harry Levin Prize in Comparative Literature.

JOHN O'BRIEN* has been a Writing-Teaching Fellow at the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a Stegner Fellow at Stanford. He currently teaches fiction in the Writing Arts Program at the State University of New York, Oswego.

ROBERT ASAHINA has written about theater for *Yale Theater* and *The American Spectator.* He is an editor of *The New York Times Book Review.*

THOMAS R. SMITH is writing a dissertation on Victorian and early twentieth-century autobiography at Rutgers University.

GEORGE KEARNS teaches in the English Department at Rutgers University. He recently published a *Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Cantos.*

J. D. MCCLATCHY* teaches English at Yale. A collection of his poems, *Scenes from Another Life,* was recently published by George Braziller.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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J. D. McCLATCHY

Lives and Times

WHITMAN WAS FASCINATED WITH CEMETERIES. Properly to invoke the tutelary spirits of the dead at the start of his prose epic *Specimen Days*, he returns to his family's burial grounds. Among the leaves of grass in those graveyards—a pastoral retreat from which springs "the deepest eloquence"—he broods on origins and ends and renewal. Later in the work, after the Civil War's terrible swift sword has been sheathed, the poet gazes dumbly on the new American landscape: a generation of brothers in that common grave called Cemeteries of the Nation, "the land entire saturated, perfumed with their impalpable ashes' exhalation." And when the Yankee prisoners of war return, he is overcome by the living corpses who survived the death-camps in the South. By the end of his life—paralyzed, then debilitated, it took him years to die—Whitman was obsessed with the design of his own tomb, a bulky granite temple in which, after his death, the bodies of his parents and siblings were reburied with him, all under his name. While making these imperial arrangements, he was plotting his final monument, the Deathbed Edition of his poetry, a life's work he sometimes feared was a mausoleum without a body, a place without its genius:

> O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
> Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
> Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon me
> I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
> But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands
> Yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd. . . .

The end of *Specimen Days* is preoccupied with the deaths of artists, Emerson and Carlyle above all, but a host of others as well. Throughout these overlapping elegies, Whitman is clearly worrying about the fate of his own arrogant poems and the identity of "the real Me." He had outlived them all, his patrons and peers and enemies. Poor, sick, the perpetual outsider and now worldwide celebrity, he made a last round of visits to their graves. In Concord, for half a century the genteel hub of American letters, he visited the Old Manse:

> I went to the old Manse, walk'd through the ancient garden, enter'd the rooms, noted the quaintness, the unkempt grass and bushes, the little panes in the windows, the low ceilings, the spicy smell, the creepers embowering the light. . . . Then riding on, a half hour at Hawthorne's and Thoreau's graves. I got out and went up of course on foot, and stood a long while and ponder'd. The flat surface of the first was

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> densely cover'd by myrtle, with a border of arbor-vitae, and the other had a brown headstone, moderately elaborate, with inscriptions. Then to Walden pond, that beautifully embower'd sheet of water, and spent over an hour there. On the spot in the woods where Thoreau had his solitary house is now quite a cairn of stones, to mark the place; I too carried one and deposited [it] on the heap.

It is an odd moment. The ambivalence of Whitman's feelings is apparent—in that stone, those pondered silences, his eerie, miniaturizing description of the house and then the ghost of a house. It is a moment of homage, and of squaring-off. How different they are, the myrtled, moderately elaborate Concord group, and the shabby, tumultuous, isolated Walt Whitman, a kosmos, one of the roughs. What can Whitman have been thinking as he stood at Hawthorne's grave? It is enough to imagine such a moment that so joins and distinguishes them, the one our somber moralist and first novelist, the other our first mythographer and greatest poet. Their lives had (whose do not?) parallel passions and reticences, incidents, accidents, highlights. Both were late starters as writers, and each debut followed an enigmatic seedtime: what Hawthorne called his "long seclusion," and what Emerson deemed the "long foreground" of *Leaves of Grass*. Both wrote in bursts, were vain about their work and frustrated by its reception. Both needed tending, and schemed for government sinecures. Perhaps it would be better to say both men needed mothering. Certainly both were emotionally bound to their mothers, whatever distance they kept from them. At fifteen Hawthorne wrote, "Why was I not a girl that I might have been pinned all my life to my Mother's apron?" (Instead, he married the adoring Sophia Peabody, who indulged his every whim.) The death of Whitman's mother was, he said, "the great dark cloud of my life," and afterwards he moved into her rooms to live "in her memory and atmosphere," by day sitting in her mahogany armchair, by night sleeping in her bed. The point is that both were withdrawn, private men, with unaccountable depths to their natures that were only sometimes evident. Hawthorne was abstemious, guarded, fastidious, scrupulously repressing his demons. Whitman, on the other hand, was secretive and obfuscating. That "great tender mother-man" once said of himself that "there is something in my nature *furtive* like an old hen!" But for all the similarities of their needs and natures, they are profoundly different, nearly opposite types of the artist. As these new biographies make clear,[1] the more we know about the two men, the less interesting Hawthorne becomes, the more mysteriously Whitman looms over our culture.

James Mellow's previous book, *Charmed Circle*, a multiple-entry ledger of Gertrude Stein & Co., sparkled with the *marivaudage moderniste* of its cast. He is now embarked on a less exuberant task: to provide an account of Concord's circle of transcendentalists in interlocking biographies, of

[1] NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE IN HIS TIMES, by *James R. Mellow*. Houghton Mifflin. $19.95. WALT WHITMAN: A Life, by *Justin Kaplan*. Simon & Schuster. $15.00.

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Hawthorne, Thoreau, Emerson, and Margaret Fuller (the first American woman, someone has suggested). Whatever the wisdom of his plan (and in an Author's Note, Mellow ingenuously invokes the example of Balzac's *Comédie*) or the eventual success of the format, he has begun with the most recalcitrant of the four. Hawthorne's life was so constricted and retiring, and his personality so shifty, that he still seems to shrink from the most meticulous biographer—as he did from the friend who once offered to brush off his greatcoat: "No, no," he countered, "I never brush my coat, it wears it out!" When, in 1897, Henry James set out to write his biography of Hawthorne for the English Men of Letters series, he put a genial light on the problem:

> Hawthorne's career was probably as tranquil and uneventful a one as ever fell to the lot of a man of letters; it was almost strikingly deficient in incident, in what may be called the dramatic quality. Few men of equal genius and of equal eminence can have led on the whole a simpler life. His six volumes of Note-Books illustrate this simplicity; they are a sort of monument to an unagitated fortune.

James's solution was largely to ignore the few facts available to him, and to concentrate on Hawthorne's work and on his anomalous position as an American artist. The result, with all its blind spots, is brilliant, and remains authoritative—but not as a biography. It is to Mellow's book we will turn, in future, when we want the facts. His biography is overstocked with them. Nothing has escaped his notice, and it all finds a place in his book. In Henry James's biography, Hawthorne was allowed to retreat into his work. In Mellow's, he is absorbed by "his Times." Presumably by reason of his long-range scheme, Mellow wants a vast panorama of nineteenth-century cultural and political life as a backdrop for his portrait. The method is sometimes fascinating, but rarely illuminating. Too many facts tend to overwhelm the shaping ideas that should animate them. That is certainly true here. We are told, apropos of Thanksgiving 1842, how much the turkey weighed (five pounds), which recipe Sophia used (from Miss Leslie's *Directions for Cooking*), and how Nathaniel carved it (by his own boast, "in a first rate style"). This is archeology, not biography. His canvas is so indiscriminately crowded, and his detours into subsidiary lives and fortunes so frequent, that Mellow is nearly forced to resort to melodramatic gestures to give his account some contour: "In that steamy midsummer of his forty-fifth year, Hawthorne reached his psychological nadir. Not only did he have to face frustrating political battles and financial anxieties, but his mother became seriously ill." Nor does the book gain by his patient attention to Hawthorne's fiction. As a literary detective, Mellow is thorough; as a critic, he is conventional, and his interpretations are marred by his apparent conviction that every turn in an author's life—every casual observation, worry, or bad cold—is registered in the next story he writes. Taking up the question, in his discussion of *The Blithedale Romance*, of whether or not Hawthorne had Margaret Fuller

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in mind as the model for Zenobia, Henry James cautioned against such easy translations: "There is no strictness in the representation by novelists of persons who have struck them in life, and there can in the nature of things be none. From the moment the imagination takes a hand in the game, the inevitable tendency is to divergence."

Perhaps his ambition, certainly his research, then, has rendered Mellow's book a loose, baggy monster. But it has two advantages, one of them probably unintended. First, we have now a much fuller record of Hawthorne's comings and goings, readings and dealings, than before. This is valuable when it supplements crucial but little-known areas of Hawthorne's life—in particular, his youth in Maine, his college years and early manhood, when he is pampered, homeless, precocious, already bridled by what he called "my cursed habits of solitude." Is it his Puritan ancestors (including a hanging judge in Salem) or his early passion for Spenser and Bunyan that prompted his profoundly allegorical imagination—complex but not subtle, prey to moralism and guilt-edged morbidity? Mellow wisely weighs both. The decade of his "long seclusion"—during which, he concluded, "my mind and character were formed"—is recounted as well as it can be. Simply to reconstruct his readings then—in history, religious tracts, travel books, autobiographies, Cervantes, Byron, and Scott—is to sense Hawthorne's dreamy study of narrative form.

Despite its tact, the very surfeit of Mellow's chronicle tends to point up the least agreeable side of Hawthorne's character. "Beneath Hawthorne's surface amiability," his biographer notes gingerly, "there was a steeliness." Melville was more taunting: "he needs roastbeef done rare." Even Sophia could say of him, "Mr. Hawthorne's passions were under his feet." This is not merely a matter of priggishness or New England rectitude, though there was plenty of that: a denial that was "NO! in Thunder." His first view of Niagara leaves him with a "wretched sense of disappointment." During his seven-year sojourn in Europe, he maintained a "horror of sightseeing," to say nothing of the oddest culinary preferences: "I doubt," he wrote home, "whether English cookery, for the very reason that it is so gross, is not better for a man's moral and spiritual nature, than French. In the former case, you know that you are gratifying your coarsest animal needs and propensities, and are duly ashamed of it; but in dealing with these French delicacies, you delude yourself into the idea that you are cultivating your taste while filling your belly." Mellow never sniggers at this, nor does he ever shy from shading in one more mean streak: there is Hawthorne's vicious anti-Semitism; his hatred of abolitionists, and distance from the Union's struggle ("I don't quite understand what we are fighting for, or what definite result can be expected"); his appalling stinginess toward his family, and dickering with his publishers; his contempt for American life, and for its culture ("America is now wholly given over to a d——d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash—and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed"); the petty but overweening greed of his tenure as consul in Liverpool; worst of all per-

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haps, his fawning use of personal friendship (with the hapless Franklin Pierce) for private gain. It is a nasty picture—nastier, I suspect, than Mellow may have meant. But then, I don't think he *meant* anything in this book but to lay out the facts. For that reason, and ironically, he has given us a more accurate because complete portrait of Hawthorne than we'd had, or maybe wanted. Hawthorne was a handsome man—"handsomer than Lord Byron!" his sister-in-law exclaimed when she first set eyes on him—and what those delicate, composed features disguised or protected or substituted for may be impossible to say. Mellow echoes others in saying Hawthorne's theme was that such perfect, Edenic selves are haunted by inherited sin. Yet the history Mellow gives us is of a man not only indicted but already damned.

Justin Kaplan's life of Whitman is a better book than Mellow's, but it is not a satisfying one. Richard Maurice Bucke, Whitman's first (and hand-picked) biographer, was concerned to tell how the "Man" transformed himself into the "Titan." Kaplan—everywhere more knowledgeable and canny than the devotional Bucke, more graceful and imaginative than the pedantic Gay Wilson Allen whose biography *The Solitary Singer* has been standard for a quarter-century—seems intent on transforming the Titan back into a man. To do that, he has contrived a biography that rearranges the life it depicts in order to throw its two extremes into high relief: his final years in Camden, and the "long foreground" of his first forty years. He begins at the end, with the last eight years of the poet's life, when he was busy endorsing "a gallery of images" to secure attention for himself and a future for his book. Busy giving contradictory confidences to his disciples, fussing with his texts to change identifications and genders, stage-managing the publicity of his neglect and martyrdom. When at last he died in 1892 and was buried in the tomb he had planned, there were readings at the Harleigh Cemetery service: a celebrated agnostic intoned "I am the resurrection and the life"; others read selections from Confucius, Buddha, Plato, the Koran, the Bible, and *Leaves of Grass*; many in the crowd felt as if they were present at "the entombment of Christ." It was just what he had wanted.

Having buried the Good Gray Poet, Kaplan then turns back to the history that, Whitman said, "is folded, folded inward and inward again in the single word I." That history includes a scrappy childhood under the narrow eye of a dissenting, ne'er-do-well father, a few years of schooling (he quit when he was eleven) before setting off to make his way as a shopkeeper, contractor, businessman, typesetter, reporter, editor, country schoolmaster, political demagogue, would-be orator, hack novelist, and loafer. Kaplan evokes all of this wonderfully, in vivid, deft strokes, with irony when it cannot be avoided, and with the vibrant enthusiasm of Whitman's own plunge into the unruly "modern civilization" of New York. His "big strong days" Whitman called these years, "days of preparation: the gathering of the forces," and Kaplan rightly trims his account to emphasize those experiences that seem to have prepared for *Leaves of Grass*. His radical politics, dominated by the twin forces of Continen-

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talism and Union, are lined up with his dabblings in phrenology and magnetism. (Lest we dismiss these pseudo-sciences out of hand, it is worth recording that, after his "bump reading," Whitman was told his "leading traits of character" were "Friendship, Sympathy, Sublimity and Self-Esteem.") His work as a book reviewer for the Brooklyn *Eagle* put him in touch with the work of Coleridge, Carlyle, Goethe and Schlegel, along with hundreds of native authors whom he, in turn, called on to band together in "a close phalanx, ardent, radical, and progressive." His passion for grand opera (and especially for the singing of Marietta Alboni—"I wonder if the lady will ever know that her singing, her method, gave the foundation, the start, thirty years ago, to all my poetic literary efforts since") is noted, and his recurrent visionary flashes of ecstasy. Though they may have prepared Whitman, all of these factors still do not prepare the reader for the monumental originality and authority of the book Whitman published anonymously and at his own expense, at age thirty-seven, on July 4, 1855. Only Wallace Stevens presents such a similarly puzzling case of an American poet's late but sudden access to the highest powers of genius. No more than Allen or Bucke, no more than Whitman himself, can Kaplan account for this conversion and its "new Bible," the tale of the American tribe.

It is at this point—more than halfway through—that the biography begins to falter. The tone sours, the treatment turns journalistic. Large areas of the poet's middle life are scanted. Not enough detailed, discerning attention is paid to Whitman's public career as a poet, to his work as a government clerk, or to his wartime service as a wound-dresser. Perhaps Kaplan's decision to reshuffle his narrative, to stress the pathetic and the unseasoned Whitman, is partly to blame. This impatience is all the more regrettable in view of Kaplan's eye for interesting connections. He draws one, for instance, between the marriage, in 1859, of Whitman's adored younger brother Jeff and the poet's "slough" that resulted first in his great ode to death "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and then in the passionate, idealizing "Calamus" cycle, which concludes with a parenthetical sigh: "(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not return'd, / Yet out of that I have written these songs)." It would have been appropriate to have pursued this theme—with a glance, say, at Henry James's behavior after the marriage of his brother William. But Kaplan merely makes the suggestion without developing it into an idea, so that it remains provocative rather than persuasive. Similarly, his frankness about Whitman's homosexuality (a relief after decades of scholarly attempts to deny or down-play it) seems to serve as his excuse not to speculate about its shaping influence on the poet's life and work. The absurd Mrs. Gilchrist is given as much space as Peter Doyle; she makes for a better story, but he was more important. Whitman described his own emotional life during these middle years as an "incessant enormous abnormal perturbation." Preoccupied with the human rather than the titanic, Kaplan slights the poet by missing the extent and the grandeur of his struggles with his own nature.

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Whitman's English admirer Edward Carpenter, after a visit, wrote of "a sense of remoteness and inaccessibility" about the old poet. "He celebrates in his poems the fluid, all-solvent disposition, but was often himself less the river than the rock." And so he remains after Kaplan's book, which never comes to terms with that remoteness. A more magisterial approach—like Walter Jackson Bate's, in his biography of Samuel Johnson—might have. And Kaplan's biography is so good—so bright and appealing, so smartly written—that it may inhibit someone else from writing a better one, one that could contain the multitude of contradictions in the life of this man who wrote a book (how? *how?*) that defined and continues to challenge American culture.

Notes on Contributors

YANNIS RITSOS*, the well-known Greek poet, lives in Athens and on the island of Samos. He is the author of many books of poetry, and his work has been widely translated.

KIMON FRIAR* is best known for his translations of modern Greek poetry, among them Kazantzakis' *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* and an anthology entitled *Modern Greek Poetry.*

KOSTAS MYRSIADES* is professor of English at West Chester State College. He has published a study of the Greek poet Takis Papatsonis and a translation (with Kimon Friar) of Ritsos' *Scripture of the Blind.*

A section from "Out for the Elements" won the £1,000 *Observer* prize for 1981. The poem will be published in its entirety in ANDREW WATERMAN's next collection, due this fall from Carcanet. Mr. Waterman is Senior Lecturer in English at the New University of Ulster.

SYDNEY LEA's first book of poems, *Searching the Drowned Man,* was published by University of Illinois Press. A second volume will appear next year. Mr. Lea is editor of *New England Review* and teaches at Middlebury College.

C. B. COX* is John Edward Taylor Professor of English at the University of Manchester, England, and co-editor of *Critical Quarterly.* His first book of verse, *Every Common Sight,* has just been published by London Magazine Editions.

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Selected back issues of
The Hudson Review
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